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CHINA!

MAY 26, 1989

These have been stirring days. The popular uprising in China, begun by students and then taken up by hundreds of thousands of workers, farmers, and other citizens—who could witness this, however fleetingly, on television or read about it, however skimpily, in the newspapers, without feeling a sense of exhilaration?

What strikes one most of all about these remarkable events is the sudden upsurge of energy and flowering of ingenuity among people without any previous experience in politics, indeed, people who have been held down for decades by a repressive dictatorship. True, there has been "participation" of a sort in the recent politics of China, but a "participation" arranged and manipulated by the ruling Communist party (which the students, with delightful wit, call "the emperor," tacitly comparing present-day tyranny with the tyrannies of their country's past).

Now, the very masses whom so many sophisticated *realpolitik* analysts had confidently relegated to the role of passivity and docility, either because of absurd notions about "Chinese national character" or theories about modern society, these masses suddenly displayed a spirit of good-natured militancy such as often occurs at the outset of popular revolutions. The mute found their voices.

With remarkable shrewdness and a kind of intuitive skill, the workers of Beijing came to the aid of the students. It was a politics of unity, a gesture of fraternity. They set up roadblocks to halt the army units that the panicky regime had called in from distant provinces. They engaged the bewildered soldiers, many of whom had been told they were coming for "maneuvers." The workers declared themselves to be brothers and sisters of the soldiers. As if out of nowhere but really from the depths of their historical situation, the workers spoke clearly and simply, without ideological gibberish, in words the peasant-soldiers could grasp. These students, they are our sons and daughters, they are risking their lives for our freedom: How can you think of shooting them down?

The soldiers hesitated. Perhaps some would have attacked the students; perhaps some may yet obey an order to attack—we cannot, at this moment, know. But mostly, the "wall" of massed humanity that was created by the workers protected the students in the central square. It was astonishing, it was wonderful. And the party "emperors" were stunned, disoriented, torn apart by factional disputes as to what to do next—disputes that seem likely to continue and deepen. The students had a ready answer: "Li Peng, resign!"

For decades to come historians will be discussing the question: How much spontaneity was there in this uprising and how much was a consequence of planning and organization? Evidently, whatever prior organization there may have been occurred among the students. One would guess—it's no more than a guess—that there soon developed a fruitful and brilliantly improvised blend of spontaneity and organization, with the two, at the high points of the uprising, almost indistinguishable. Who directed the thousands to the various blockade points outside the central square? Who arranged for the convoys bringing food to the protestors? Who made the signs? Who found the speakers? (Perhaps they found themselves.)

In any case, whatever the verdict of future historians, it does seem from recent events in the Philippines and now China that the theory of spontaneity put forward by Rosa Luxemburg has gained at least partial vindication.

Still another impression remains from these early days of the uprising, and that has to do with the role of stupidity in history—a phenomenon that no political theory has taken sufficiently into account.

The student protests began on a very mild and modest note. They wanted a public discussion with representatives of the government; they wanted the authorities to respond to expressions of popular discontent. Had the government agreed, it seems likely that at least for a time it could have avoided the humiliation it has suffered at the hands of the people. But power not only makes for corruption, it also makes for arrogance and that, in turn, materializes as stupidity. The Communist "emperors" would not yield to a simple popular request, for they had been trained in the repressive dogma of the Leninist-Stalinist "vanguard party" according to

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which history is the possession of a self-chosen elite, those "professional revolutionaries" now become decrepit and corrupt bureaucrats. Reaction and stupidity are twins.

What we are witnessing is the collapse of the last remnants of Stalinism, remnants clung to by the Communist "emperors" who had themselves dismantled the economic structure left by Mao but feared, understandably, to allow a parallel loosening in politics. And not only is this historic development happening in China. Even in the few countries where the old Stalinist ways survive—Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Rumania—the days of Stalinism are numbered. We have lived to see it—hurrah!

I do not write these few words as an expert on China. I do not know the details of the inner-party struggle—right now, toward the end of May, no one else seems to, either. But no matter. We hope that in later issues we will print more expert analyses. But for now, the great thing is to celebrate the rising of the Chinese people, to speak with admiration about the students and workers of Beijing, to study their suddenly brilliant capacities for political struggle, and to cherish the humane spirit in which they have thus far acted.

The world is alive again —I.H. □

June 5, 1989; We mourn the hundreds, perhaps thousands, who were massacred in Beijing by the reactionary Communist regime, which the students have rightly called "the emperor." And we pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of Chinese students and workers in many parts of the country who are continuing the struggle for "the Goddess of Liberty."—Eds.

WELCOME ABOARD

Three new members have been added to our editorial board.

Paul Berman is a former columnist for the *Nation* and the *Village Voice* and is writing a book about the city of Masaya, Nicaragua.

Todd Gitlin teaches sociology and mass communications at the University of California, Berkeley. His books include *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* and *Inside Prime Time*.

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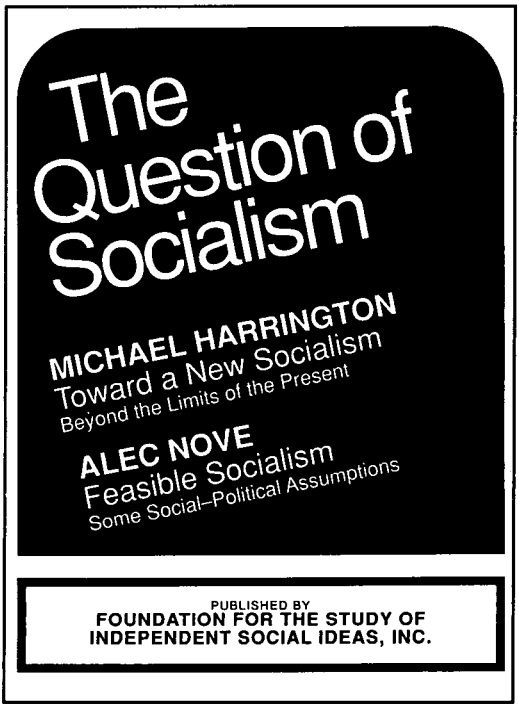

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Ethan Goffman

HEALTH CARE: SOME NEW PROPOSALS

The disruption caused by our chaotic medical system has reached such proportions that mainstream medical thought is beginning to call for a major revision of health services. As costs sprout upward the already limited care for low-income patients is further eroded while the middle classes increasingly feel the squeeze. Arnold Relman, the influential editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine,* suggests that "we urgently need a new and more comprehensive approach to health policy. . . ." Only drastic measures can "repair or replace our present disastrously inadequate health care financing system."

The January 12, 1989, *Journal* contains two proposals for reform. The first is relatively decentralized, based on competing health plans and mandatory coverage through employers. The second, of more interest to *Dissent* readers, calls for a national health-care system, funded through mixed sources but ultimately channeled through the federal government. This proposal, endorsed by over four hundred doctors from across the country, makes clear why physicians support a program that seems to contradict their financial interest, that is, why our current health system is failing.

Inequalities in treatment due to unjust distribution of medical facilities and ballooning costs discourage low-income patients from seeking timely preventive care. So their diseases are treated at a late stage, causing unnecessary suffering and expense. Meanwhile wealthier patients with superior coverage may receive unnecessary treatment solely to line the pockets of unscrupulous doctors.

Our medical treatment system also costs more than systems that deliver superior care. Canada's national health system, as well as our own Medicare system, spends only 2 to 3 percent of its budget on overhead. By contrast, overhead accounts for roughly 8 percent of private insurance costs. The multiplicity of private insurance companies creates duplication of paperwork and excessive bureaucracy. The argument that a free market maximizes efficiency and productivity (however inequitable its allocation) is turned on its head. In some circumstances, it seems, centralization provides better service at a better price.

Centralization is the key to the "National Health Program." All funding would be channeled through a single pool, which would set budgets for all hospitals and nursing homes. With the profit motive removed, hospitals and physicians would have no incentive to skimp on or allocate care unevenly. Long-term funding would be provided to those hospitals and services that showed greatest need. With national standardization, billing would also be greatly simplified. The new system would be beneficial both in terms of financing and fairness.

Conspicuous in this proposal is an avoidance of the words "Socialized Medicine." In our current political climate, such terms are forbidden—indeed pains are taken to deny their applicability. Relman argues that "neither [plan] represents the socialization of health care because the government would not own or operate health-care facilities or employ physicians." Traditional American hostility to government ownership leads to some convoluted methods of sneaking in all the features of socialization while avoiding the term itself. Yet parallels with the European welfare state, and with even older socialist ideals, are abundantly clear. The plan states that "access to care should be based on need rather than on age or ability to pay." This echoes the words of a certain nineteenth-century economist, "From each according to his ability. . . ."

The *New England Journal of Medicine* can be obtained by writing to 1440 Main Street, Waltham, MA 01254-1649.

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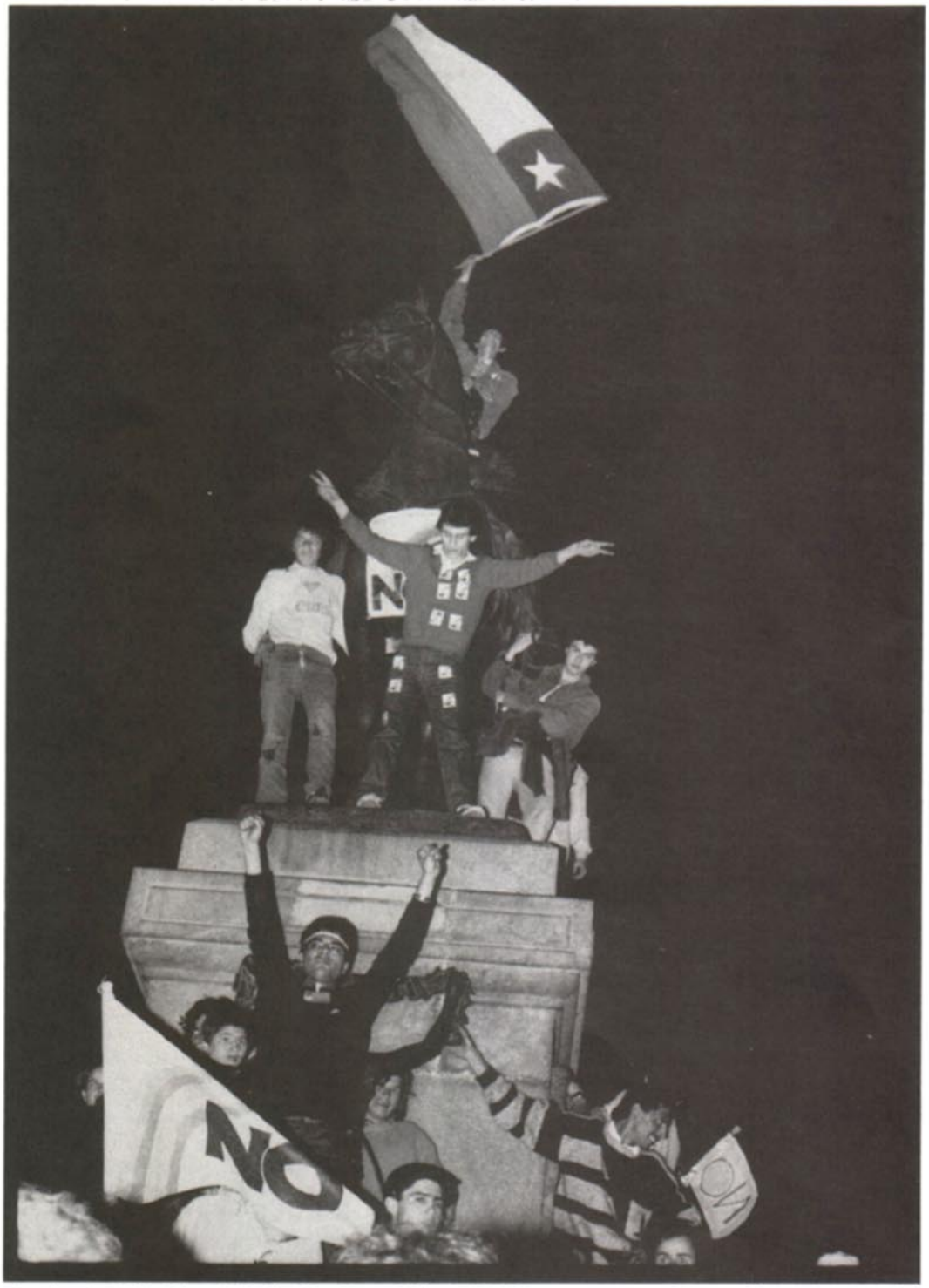

October 6, 1988, Plaza D'Italia, Santiago, Chile: "No" Vote supporters take over Plaza after Pinochet government concedes defeat during plebiscite. (Ricky Flores/IMPACT VISUALS)

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Tina Rosenberg

WILL DEMOCRACY COME TO CHILE?

Chile's plebiscite of October 1988 was a dramatic ending to fifteen painful years. Capitan General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, President of the Republic of Chile, notorious worldwide as a symbol of violence and repression, lost an election he himself had designed. He tried to declare himself the winner anyway, and his own military junta prevented him. In a continent that rarely sees good news, this was a story with a happy ending: Chile returns to democracy.

Most Latin American countries have "returned to democracy" in the last ten years. Since the late 1970s, military dictatorships have fallen (at least temporarily) in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. But foreign curiosity usually vanishes with the dictator. These new democracies may still have economic problems, the thinking goes, but at least they no longer suffer massacres, torture, and disappearances.

Then why is it that disappearances, massacres, and torture continue to occur in democratic Latin America? And why must these countries keep "returning to democracy" again and again? Replacing a dictatorship with an elected, civilian government is a first, crucial step to building democracy. But it is just one step. The countries with the worst human rights records in Latin America at the moment are all democracies—Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, and Guatemala. General Pinochet in Chile is a right-wing military dictator whose social philosophy is summed up by his recent statement, "We must take good care of the rich because they're the ones with the money." His neighbor in Peru, democratically elected Alan Garcia, is an energetic social reformer, an eloquent spokesman for the oppressed. In the last few years, Pinochet's security forces have killed about fifty-five people a year, and the "disappeared" total five people. Garcia's security forces have killed or "disappeared" one hundred people a year. Counting from 1980, when Peru "returned to democracy," to 1987, its security forces have killed or "disappeared" 13,000 people. In the same period in Chile, the security forces of Pinochet's dictatorship killed or "disappeared" 400.

In Colombia, which has a civilian president chosen in a two-party election, the Permanent Human Rights Commission publishes a thick folder every month with such sections as Genocides, Assassinations, Death Threats, and Tortures. All it can do is denounce the violence—there is too much of it to investigate, the justice system is too weak to offer recourse, and anyone trying to investigate would be immediately killed. Right-wing death squads with clear links to the armed forces were responsible for twenty-five massacres of workers or peasants in the first six months of 1988 alone. In the offices of Unión Patriótica, a new left-wing political party, one of the party's officers showed me a computer printout of names of the more than six hundred party members killed since 1985.

This isn't, of course, a justification for dictatorship. In the early 1980s, when a military junta ruled El Salvador, the armed forces killed roughly 13,000 people a year. In 1985, with José Duarte in the presidency, the killings dropped to 2,000. They dropped further but recently have been rising again, though not to the levels of 1981. It now seems that military officers will be seriously prosecuted for the massacre of ten peasants in the village of San Sebastian—the first such prosecution. The murder of 2,000 civilians instead of 13,000 is a great improvement. That more soldiers in El Salvador are building hospitals and fewer are machine-gunning citizens is undeniably a change for the better. But this is not democracy.

Duarte in Salvador, Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala, and Virgilio Barco in Colombia are not dictators. But in supporting these men, the United States also supports brutal militaries and repressive social groups that block even the most pathetic steps at democratization. I went to a Chamber of Commerce meeting in El Salvador where the military's

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then-Commander in Chief, General Adolfo Blandón, presented a program to build hospitals and schools in rural areas as a way to fight the guerrillas. The program had its origin in U.S. policy in Vietnam, and it was obvious that Blandón saw it as a small price for his half-billion dollars a year from the United States. The Chamber was dominated by coffee growers (recipients of healthy doses of U.S. aid to "strengthen the private sector," although it's hard to see how they could get any stronger), who criticized the plan as "a step towards socialism" and invited the army to stage yet another coup. There are many words for this kind of theater, but "democracy" does not come to mind.

A History of Democracy

Traditional measures of "democracy" used by scholars have focused on either the means or the ends: the strength of parties, freedom of the press, and independence of the judiciary or income distribution, literacy rates, and other quality-of-life indicators. I wish to propose a more basic focus: the values that underlie the society and produce (or do not produce) both the means and the ends of democracy. Democracy is how people relate to the government and to each other. An elected, civilian government is just one natural outgrowth of a democratic society. Another is that the armed forces do not go around killing people with whom they are not at war. Another is that the basis of rule is law, not mere power—the justice system works and works fairly. Another is that people can get what they want by working within the system; they turn to politics and not to violence. Citizens of a democracy feel powerful. They feel their opinions matter. They feel their government is reasonably fair to them. Their government is strong, not in the sense of being big and controlling much of society, but in the sense of having popular legitimacy.

The United States falls short; but this is also not a description of most countries in Latin America, no matter how their presidents dress. The conquest and colonization of most of Latin America was characterized by frantic greed. The worst pirates and criminals of Spain came to the New World in search of gold. The Indians they did not kill they enslaved to work in the mines and as laborers on sugar and fruit plantations. The Spaniards governed, if it can be called that, with violence and corruption. Independence meant replacing repressive rule by foreigners with repressive rule by locals. The repression was usually backed by the United States, which sought to protect its strategic or economic interests. The Latin oligarchy learned arrogance and the Latin poor silence, habits that remain to this day.

That Pinochet's Chile is one of the last outposts of dictatorship in Latin America is a bizarre accident of history. Chile had the good fortune to be extremely isolated and extremely poor. Chile is practically an island, enclosed by the world's driest desert, the Pacific, the ridge of the Andes, and Antarctica. The few Indian tribes did not go docilely into slavery; the Araucano tribe was so fierce that it surrendered formally only in the twentieth century. Its land was terrible for plantation agriculture and its minerals were boring; who cared about nitrates and copper when Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina were bursting with gold and silver?

Chile's second point of departure came in 1829, when Diego Portales, a businessman, came to power. Never president, Portales as minister dominated three presidents. Portales's dream was to end the rule of strongmen, or *caudillos*, and establish the rule of law. He fired half the army and subordinated the other half to civilian rule. He set up institutions with the novel idea that the state was there to serve the country as a whole and left office so poor that at times he didn't have change for cigarettes.

Chile was a good deal more egalitarian than most places in Latin America. (The other poor cousin during the conquest was Costa Rica, which had little gold and few Indians to be enslaved. Today, Costa Rica is the only real, stable democracy in Latin America and the only country in the world to have abolished its armed forces.) Modern Chile is not a wealthy country; it ranks seventh in per capita income in Latin America. But it was always the most middle-class country, the most educated, and the country with the strongest state. Until 1973, Chile enjoyed 150 years of elected civilian government, with one period of dictatorship, from 1927 to 1931.

Chilean democracy permeated all aspects of society. While in most Latin countries education means copying what the teacher writes on a blackboard—in all but a handful of private schools in Peru, students graduating from high school will never have read a book—Chilean education was different. Students had to read books, criticize them, and write essays. Students were required to think and question.

Chile was not accustomed to violence. A policeman who quit the force shortly after the coup told me that until 1973 the police were forbidden to raise their nightsticks above shoulder level. When a worker was killed during a strike in the late 1960s, a

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million people took to the streets in protest. A human rights lawyer told me of a case he represented during those years that became such a scandal that Salvador Allende, then president of the Senate, came to investigate personally: A prisoner's ears had been boxed. That's what passed for torture in Chile.

The national sport was politics. "The first thing you did if you formed a soccer team was elect officers and write up pages of by-laws and rules," a Santiago businessman said. *Caudillos* did not sell here. A big night in Chile means a bottle of wine and an argument about whether Clodomiro Almeyda's wing of the Socialist party will support a Christian Democratic presidential candidate.

When Allende became president in 1970, a socialist was elected to power in Latin America for the first time in history. There was no censorship during Allende's government, there were no political prisoners. Allende's democratic spirit was part of the tradition of the left. The Communist party had worked within the system and never supported armed struggle—until Pinochet.

Where Did Pinochet's Support Come From?

How could a Pinochet have come to power in such a climate? The last years of the Allende government were chaotic—in part because of sabotage by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the Chilean right, in part because of bad management—but this alone could not have provoked the coup. The coup required two other factors and they were supplied, ironically, by Chile's tradition of gentlemen's politics. First, no one believed that a Pinochet could happen in Chile. Allende never bothered to create armed organizations to defend the government. In December 1971, Allende's most trusted general tried to sue *Tribuna,* a right-wing magazine, for suggesting that the armed forces should break their loyalty to President Allende. "Military coups are not seen in Chile," said the general, whose name was Augusto Pinochet.

The second factor was that Chileans were so accustomed to think of the military as a benign force that many supported the coup who would not otherwise have done so. This was especially true for the centrist Christian Democratic party.

A dictator's life is easier, of course, in countries with long histories of dictatorship. But by a different, perverse logic, the Chilean democratic tradition also helped to keep Pinochet in power for fifteen years. When the government killed thousands of people in the first few years after the coup, Chileans preferred not to notice. Although Santiago's Mapocho River was red with blood and bodies were left in the street, many Chileans to this day believe that the deaths and tortures exist only in the imagination of the left. Willful blindness is a common defense mechanism. Speaking out is risky, and for those who supported the coup it is simply more comfortable not to know. All this was made easier because there was no precedent for the hell they were living. "The government just does not do those kinds of things," I heard over and over.

In 1980, his popularity high because of an economic boom, Pinochet submitted a new constitution to popular vote. He won 67 percent approval in a blatantly fraudulent election (something else that had been unknown in Chile), but Chileans were so distracted by their new television sets and refrigerators that he might have won anyway. Congress was in permanent recess; political parties were outlawed; habeas corpus was ignored; dissidents were jailed and exiled; but it was now all "legal." The Constitution contained another stroke of genius: a call for a plebiscite before March 1989. The vision of a political end to Pinochet's term—although nine years away—bought him years in office. When the economy crashed and protests began in 1983, they never really reflected the depth of opposition to Pinochet. One reason, of course, was fear. But more than that, a plebiscite was on the horizon. Many Chileans preferred to wait for the "legal" way out.

Over the past fifteen years Pinochet has done his best to erase Chile's democratic culture. That the regime kills "only" fifty-five people a year is not an indication of benign character. It is simply that more killings would be unproductive. Pinochet has achieved a subtle balance—just enough repression to quiet political activity but not enough to wake up Chileans, who prefer to sleep through the dictatorship.

Fear has changed Chile. The vast majority of Chileans have lived all their adult lives under Pinochet. They have learned that silence is health. Silence is the guarantor of everything from Christmas toys distributed by the city government to a job, to physical liberty, to survival itself. The wise worker ignores calls for strikes, keeps his political views to himself, and attends Pinochet rallies in the soccer stadiums, waving banners if he is asked. Chileans have learned a new and dangerous skill, that of figuring out what the boss wants them to say, think, and do.

The free-market economic policies Milton Friedman and "los Chicago boys" brought to Chile could be put into practice only if there were no pressure groups to protest the new low salaries (the lowest in Latin America) and thousands of bankruptcies caused by opening Chile's markets. Labor unions,

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political parties, trade associations, and neighborhood groups were shut down. Women were arrested for organizing soccer clubs. Meetings of any kind were considered subversive—in the first years after the coup, even Miss Chile was appointed. Officials talk about the miracle of modern Chile, as if the new computers and skyscrapers mean that the country has beaten underdevelopment. Such talk is the technocratic equivalent of a king's smug assurance that his peasants are happy because his castle is large. Pinochet's peasants are not happy; they are resentful of the inequality in their society. Since 1973, consumption by Santiago's poorest fifth dropped 30 percent, while that by the top fifth has risen 15 percent. While the private hospitals proudly demonstrate their new CAT scan machines, at the public hospitals mothers are told that the next available appointment is two months away, and they couldn't afford the medicine anyway. In November, a newspaper reported that a man died in the street outside a public hospital because he could not pay the 200-peso fee—about seventy cents—for medical attention.

A college education, which under Allende was free to all, is now within reach of only the middle and upper classes. Education itself has changed. After the coup, the government dissolved the "subversive-infested" sociology and political science departments. They are back but rigidly controlled—sociology, political science, and economics courses today are more like religious instruction in the revealed truth of free markets and the red peril.

Pinochet broke the common accord Chileans had formed to work for change through politics and not violence. The coup may haunt Chile for centuries. Chile never had left-wing guerrilla groups before. Now it has two. Their violence, which plays into Pinochet's hands, has killed innocent people and has increased since the recent plebiscite. The pact of democracy is precarious; once broken, it is likely to be broken again.

What Will Democracy Require?

The task of returning to democracy is enormous. The first problem is that Pinochet is still Chile's dictator—a lame-duck dictator, but a dictator. The Constitution calls for elections by December 1989. Pinochet will probably have to abide by the rules. His loss in the recent plebiscite drained much of his support; an attempt at a coup would not draw many supporters. But even if he follows the rules, the game is still rigged. The Constitution provides for a National Security Council of the armed forces that would have virtual veto power over executive decisions. One-third of the Senate would be appointed, not elected, and the election procedures for the rest favor Pinochet's supporters. The Communist party is still illegal, and anyone convicted of harboring ideas that "conspire against the family" can be banned, South Africa style.

A second serious problem is the threat of a new coup. A military that had never before mixed in politics now has tasted power. Some opposition politicians have backed full trials for military officers involved in "disappearances" and torture. Others leave the question open but endorse an investigation. Neither is likely to please the armed forces, who believe an ungrateful Chile should recognize their historic fight against the communist threat. Argentina has seen three recent coup attempts because the government has refused to grant the military amnesty. The Chilean military will likely be in a stronger position, leaving office amidst congratulations for turning the government over to civilians.

A new government must also encourage the reconstruction of the country's political and social organizations. Although these organizations had proliferated to the point of parody, they never reached as far as they should have. The voices of the very poorest, urban and rural, were not really heard until the Allende years, and Pinochet has silenced them completely. This was Chilean democracy's weakest point. The challenge is to make these groups strong without provoking a reaction from the right that will once again break the political system.

These are all measurable building blocks of democracy. But they have their foundation in an elusive quality that cannot be seen, merely felt: *Chile must rebuild the culture of argument*. The last fifteen years have taught Chileans to be passive and dependent, not just with regard to politics, but in how they treat one another. Chile's prospects for the future depend, in large measure, on whether its people can overcome self-censorship in their daily lives.

Chile is better prepared for this work than most countries in Latin America. Despite Pinochet's frantic efforts, Chile retains some important qualities of democratic societies. One is public faith in law. Hugo Rodríguez, a Peruvian human rights lawyer, told me that in the past few years Peruvians have filed exactly eight habeas corpus petitions. "In Chile, they've filed thousands. They never work, but they keep filing them anyway." For nonpolitical

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crimes, Chilean courts are still the fairest in Latin America.

Chile does not show signs of the breakdown that one sees in other places. People do not throw garbage on the ground. Although in Lima, Peru, people drive on whichever side of the street they feel like, drivers in Chile stop at red lights even on deserted streets at 2 A.M. Chileans joke that theirs is the only country where the tanks stop at traffic lights during a military coup.

Chile is also remarkably free of corruption, important because nothing causes people to lose faith in government faster. Undoubtedly some government officials and military officers are enriching themselves, but corruption is certainly not one of the constants of doing business, as in Peru, Mexico, or Paraguay.

Most important, Pinochet has not been able to extinguish Chile's love of politics. A few months before the plebiscite, it seemed as though he had. On a Sunday visit to Santiago's La Pincoya slum, I found that one person among the forty I interviewed had registered to vote. When I asked people if they planned to register, most shrugged. In the opposition's focus groups, people said they felt shut out of society. They felt that no one was listening. But instead of turning their anger against the government, they retreated inward.

But it soon became apparent that this apathy was a function of fear and the seeming hopelessness of political activity. I went back to the same slums several times before the plebiscite. By now people all over the country were joining parties and going to demonstrations, and this offered a new sense of momentum. In La Pincoya new party headquarters had sprung up, people openly made political jokes and almost everyone ended up registering to vote.

The plebiscite was a good deal more impressive than the presidential elections a month later in the United States. When registration closed, more than 90 percent of all adults had gone through an expensive—the new ID card required cost nearly a day's salary at minimum wage—and time-consuming process of registering to vote. The *Si* campaign's message was that the *No* would bring chaos and terror, but the *No* campaign spoke responsibly about serious issues—poor salaries, lack of health care and education, torture, censorship. The importance of money was minimal—the government lost to an opposition that had almost no money at all. Television time was free. A *No* campaign rally a week before the plebiscite attracted more than a million and a quarter people, a tenth of the population of Chile. It was the largest demonstration in Chilean history. Millions waited peacefully for hours in the broiling sun to vote. Their government excepted, Chileans during the plebiscite were model democrats.

Will this attitude last? In politically repressed societies, first opportunities to vote usually attract massive participation. Voting itself is a catharsis; later, interest falls. The plebiscite, however, is certainly a reason for optimism about Chile's future. In voting a dictator out of office, Chile accomplished a true miracle. Months after the plebiscite Chileans are still euphoric, still talking about the "lesson in democracy" they taught the world.

The reverse of my hope for Chile is a sense of despair regarding its neighbors, whose legacy from the past is less fortunate. A country's social culture, which strongly affects the development of political institutions and distribution of wealth, is greatly influenced by history; we are in some measure blessed or damned from the start.

Social culture is not immutable. It is easy to replace a culture of cooperation and participation with one of fear. It can be done in one long night.

To Our Contributors:

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your ms—the mails aren't always reliable. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. No dot matrix submissions, *please*.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

(6) Please bear with us—we have accumulated quite a backlog of material, and you may have to wait for a few issues before you see your article in print.

THE EDITORS □

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Moving in the other direction is more difficult. It requires years of a civilian government committed to democracy to nurture the changes—building grassroots organizations that encourage participation in government, constructing a justice system that works fairly, educating young people to challenge authority—which can allow a country to reinvent its political culture. There is every reason to think that given the time for these institutions to take root, real democracy is possible in Latin America. The problem is that governments committed to building democracy rarely last long enough to find out. □

Frank Smyth

SAND DIGGERS AND THE STRONGMAN

VISTA HERMOSA, EL SALVADOR

A powerful torrent during the high rains, Rio Las Canas is a trickle of muddy water from October to May. It begins ten kilometers from the city center, carving its way north past volcanic slopes, eventually feeding into the large, man-made reservoir that separates government-held terrain from contested zones. But there is no fighting between government and guerrilla forces where the river begins—only the taking of sand from its shores.

Homes made of dried mud and bamboo shafts dot Las Canas's western bank. Inside the riverbed barefoot workers with rolled-up pants load sand into waiting trucks. Farther downstream the riverbed is demarcated by a barbed-wire fence. Beyond the fence bulldozers load sand into trucks watched by heavily armed men.

Used primarily to make concrete, sand in El Salvador is sold on site for $25 a truckload. In an export-oriented economy dominated by more valuable cash crops, even the country's prolific Marxists have failed to designate such a cheap commodity as a vehicle of class struggle. But, for the riverbank community of Vista Hermosa, sand, not coffee, is king.

Vista Hermosa is located far from the large agricultural plantations in the western region of the country that offer seasonal labor. With a combined under- and unemployment rate in El Salvador of well over 50 percent, few if any of the community's residents have access to better paying jobs in the capital city of San Salvador. Like most of El Salvador's marginal population, they also receive no external assistance. A hodgepodge of peasants from various parts of the country, the people living along the river fall neither into official categories of earthquake victims nor war refugees that would make them eligible for U.S. targeted aid.

Most of the river dwellers from Vista Hermosa live in constant fear of falling beyond the edge of survival. Prices of food staples have more than quadrupled in the past three years. A typical "food basket" for a family consists primarily of corn tortillas with salt, and perhaps an occasional plate of higher priced rice and beans.

But unlike the less fortunate who pick their meals from refuse piles in San Salvador's central market, the 350-odd people from Vista Hermosa and two other nearby communities have had regular work. Breadwinners earn their living standing knee-deep in mud, shoveling sand into twenty-foot trucks for $3 a load. Depending upon demand, a strong young man might make up to $15 on a good summer day. But lesser-abled bodies usually earn about $3, provided that rain doesn't wash the sand downstream.

Even with cheap labor abundant, entrepreneur José René Mendoza finds it more advantageous to employ modern machinery to excavate the river. He could further maximize profits if he could monopolize the sale of sand and charge a higher price for every load. But first he would have to eliminate the competition; all digging by independents would have to stop. Mendoza plans to make himself master of Rio Las Canas.

Before the rainy season came, Mendoza expropriated an extension of the riverbed and brought in bulldozers to replace the work of men. Mendoza says he owns the area encircled by the barbed-wire fence, and adds that the rest of the riverbed is the property of other landowners like himself. Pointing to the workers loading sand by spade he says, "Those people have no property titles, they are trespassers on private land."

The people from Vista Hermosa claim that the river is in the public domain. They avoid the part watched over by Mendoza's armed guards. Depen-

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dent on their daily earnings, workers (about a third of whom are women and preadolescent children) walk the trail every morning to the water's edge. The private truckers, who don't seem to mind whose land they are on, buy from both the independents and Mendoza. The latter's conflict is not with those who take from the river, but only those who dig.

An association of agricultural workers is trying to organize the sand diggers and their community. A number of workers from Vista Hermosa, including José Arnoldo Cerritos and Arturo Navarro Garcia, decided to join. But the peasant association belongs to a larger trade union coalition, which Salvadoran and U.S. government officials say is a front group for the country's leftist guerrillas.

The issue appears to be about property rights and the question of public versus private domain. In El Salvador, such matters are rarely if ever settled before a formal court. Rather, from the perspective of the authorities, the dispute here is between a respected landowner and businessman and three base-wage sand diggers who are members of a known subversive organization.

Leaving aside strictly legal questions, I will let the reader decide whether this case is a political or civil dispute. I will also leave it to the reader to decide if the way in which it was (partially) resolved should be characterized as a political or a common crime. But let me forewarn, your decision is moot. Either way, the story that follows is endemic in a society and social structure that seven years and $3.3 billion in U.S. aid failed to change.

Nineteen-year-old Maria Luisa Leiva was in her mud-walled home with her husband, uncle, and two children the evening of April 14, 1988. Three armed men in olive green uniforms came to the door and told her to put out the light. They asked for her husband by name and said, "Tell Arnoldo Cerritos to come out." The men bound his wrists and then took both Arnoldo and the uncle away. Maria Luisa was told that she would be taken too if she tried to follow. One of the uniformed men remained five minutes to make sure she stayed behind.

Arturo Navarro and his eighteen-year-old helper were intercepted by armed men near the same house about fifteen minutes later. They were ordered to lie face down and were asked their names. One of the uniformed men left for a few minutes and then returned. He said, "Are you Arturo Navarro? Then you're coming with us." The men led Arturo away in the direction of the river. The younger captive was searched and set free.

The next day both Maria Luisa and Arturo's wife went to the air force base at Ilopango to inquire about their husbands and the uncle. The communities along the river are patrolled regularly by the air force, who were present in Vista Hermosa under daylight on April 14. The air force patrols are elite U.S.-trained paratroopers, distinguished from the other military services by their maroonish red berets. The uniformed men who came the night before were hatless, although one was carrying a "red beret" in the same hand as his black-barreled gun.

An air force sergeant spoke to the wives, and then made a phone call asking for the three disappeared men by name. He told the women to wait a moment, as he thought that the men were in custody on the base. Three young men appeared, heavily armed and in civilian clothes. They spoke to the sergeant, and then told the women that the people they were looking for were not there.

The base at Ilopango is just a few kilometers from the scene of the abduction. But the men's bodies were found two days later in a ravine near the airport some thirty kilometers away. When asked about the murders two weeks later, Mendoza said, "We didn't kill them." No doubt a truthful retort. The murders had been denounced as the work of the armed forces based at Ilopango by Auxiliary Archbishop Rosa Chavez in his Sunday homily a few days before.

The killings are not particularly surprising for El Salvador. Nor, despite at least two adult eyewitnesses to the abduction, that they will go uninvestigated, unpunished, and officially unsolved. But what is unusual is that the attempt to intimidate the community didn't work. At the time of this writing, twenty to thirty sand diggers can still be seen within eyesight of the fenced-off property claimed by Mendoza on any given day; more than a hundred others can be found further on—either up- or down-stream. Unable to support themselves and their families any other way, the motley assembly of workers (who include one or two pregnant women) will continue to dig as long as they need to or can.

That survival could be the flip side of subversion is something that both the paratroopers and José René Mendoza fail to grasp. José Santana, for instance, begs a journalist to help him, as he has heard rumors that he will be next. His voice shrill and cracking, the terrified man stutters as he explains that he is not so much worried about himself but for his family and how they would support themselves if he should disappear. José Santana is the cousin of one of the victims and knew the other two. But despite the danger, a month after the murders he is still digging as before.

The nine-year-old son of Arturo says he doesn't understand why his father was killed. But now that he is the breadwinner, Oscar carries his father's shovel to the river every morning to dig. But the boy

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earns only about a dollar working a half day, as his mother, who also digs, wants him to stay in school.

Oscar is too young to be a member of the peasant association to which his father belonged. But there is no doubt that in the eyes of José René Mendoza, the son following his father to the river is an outlaw. In a country where property and power remain the rule of law, a beleaguered landlord can phone the armed forces' twenty-four-hour hotline to report a subversive act. There is no number to call, however, if armed men in olive green uniforms take a relative away in the night. □

Enrique Krauze

A LETTER FROM MEXICO

Ten years ago I tried to interpret Mexico for Ilana and Irving Howe in a single day. I took them to Aztec ruins and to markets where indigenous customs live on virtually intact. We strolled through the center of Mexico City, heart of our Spanish heritage. I gave them a canned version of our nineteenth-century liberal tradition and our twentieth-century social revolution. I remember overwhelming them with long exegeses on Mexican life: its religious syncretism, its aesthetic sensibility, the intense feeling of community in our small towns, neighborhoods and families. "For better or for worse," I told them, "What Max Weber called the 'continuous desacramentalizing of the world' has still not happened here." Later that day we visited one of the most extraordinary examples of Baroque architecture, the temple of Tepotzotlan, built by Jesuits in the eighteenth century. The inner altar is a gilded, exuberant overgrowth. After a few moments, Irving turned to leave, confessing to me, kindly, his discomfort: "I can't understand all this. I'm only a Jewish rationalist."

Because I too am a Jewish rationalist, I have no intention of repeating this experiment with the readers of *Dissent*. By which I do not mean that Mexico is indecipherable, nor that *Dissent*'s readers can allow themselves the luxury of ignoring it. One of the most entrenched mistakes of intellectual life in the United States is its turning towards the Atlantic—now towards the Pacific as well—without deigning to look North or South. It is true that Europe is America's past, and its future may well lie in the East, but its ideological headaches and the silent encroachment of demography come from the South. For Americans to refuse to learn about the life and history of the countries south of their border is, at this time, a refusal to learn about themselves. But above all, their intellectual neglect of the South is politically costly. The most obvious proof is the endless debate over the Central American crisis, about which even liberal opinion is off course. Looking across the Atlantic as usual, theorists have tried to find the historical explanation for these states and their revolutions in Marxism, interpreted either as salvation or death sentence. The true historical explanation is quite different, and lies in the South, in a political theology that took root many years ago, and that profoundly affects the ideas, practices, and institutions of Spanish America, namely Neothomism.

Think of Mexico, for example. The first article of the Constitution of 1917 declares that Mexico is a representative, democratic, and federal republic. Actually, the State of Mexico has always been a monarchy in republican clothing, a centralized, antidemocratic monarchy of only one party. Daniel Cosio Villegas, one of our great—and rare—liberal thinkers, described it as an "absolute, hereditary, horizontally moving, six-year monarchy." The Constitution grants the president almost unlimited power. Octavio Paz best described this political structure in 1969 when he called it a pyramid with the president reigning from its apex. Since 1917 the legislative and judicial branches, though formally recognized in the Constitution, have remained subordinate to the executive. The press has only occasionally suffered governmental coercion, but over the years it has not been noteworthy for critical professionalism or for its defense of democracy.

Cosio Villegas used to say that it is "a free press that neither knows how nor wishes to use its freedom." In such circumstances the natural counterbalance to an omnipotent presidency should be the intellectuals, but with a few exceptions they have

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traditionally been coopted by the establishment. To crown it all, the autonomy of regional and local power centers that was consecrated in the Constitution has become a dead issue: Governors are picked and controlled by the central authority. Yet despite all this, Mexico has never known a totalitarian regime. One could even claim that Mexico's political system has not been particularly authoritarian. Mexicans have always enjoyed real civic liberties, unrestricted except in cases that might threaten the perpetuation of the system.

What kind of system is it? Oddly enough, the American historian Richard Morse was the first to show that politics in Mexico—and in Latin America generally—does not function like an open forum where individuals air their differences in orderly fashion, but rather like an architectural monument "made to last," not to change; a corporate political structure, a hierarchic, coherent, and especially organic entity in which the will of the governing body and the will of the masses must be harmonized in the name of "civic felicity." This concept of a beneficent, protective, and paternalistic state that reconciles within itself—or, if this is impossible, suppresses—all dissidence, is the work of the Spanish sixteenth-century Neothomists, especially Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez.

Nicaragua today seems much more like an extreme, intolerant version of this Neothomist model than like the Eastern "Socialist" states. How many analyses and counteranalyses of the theme have taken this political and historical perspective into account? Very few, unfortunately. This is why many things are misunderstood (Fidel Castro's political and mental resistance to *perestroika,* for instance). This is why the intellectual debate in the United States over Central America and Mexico makes no progress: it begins from false premises, then oscillates between paternalism and rejection. It applies the categories of Marx, our most radical rationalist, to what is actually the realm of Thomist scholasticism.

Translated from the Spanish by RACHEL PHILLIPS BELASH □

dissent

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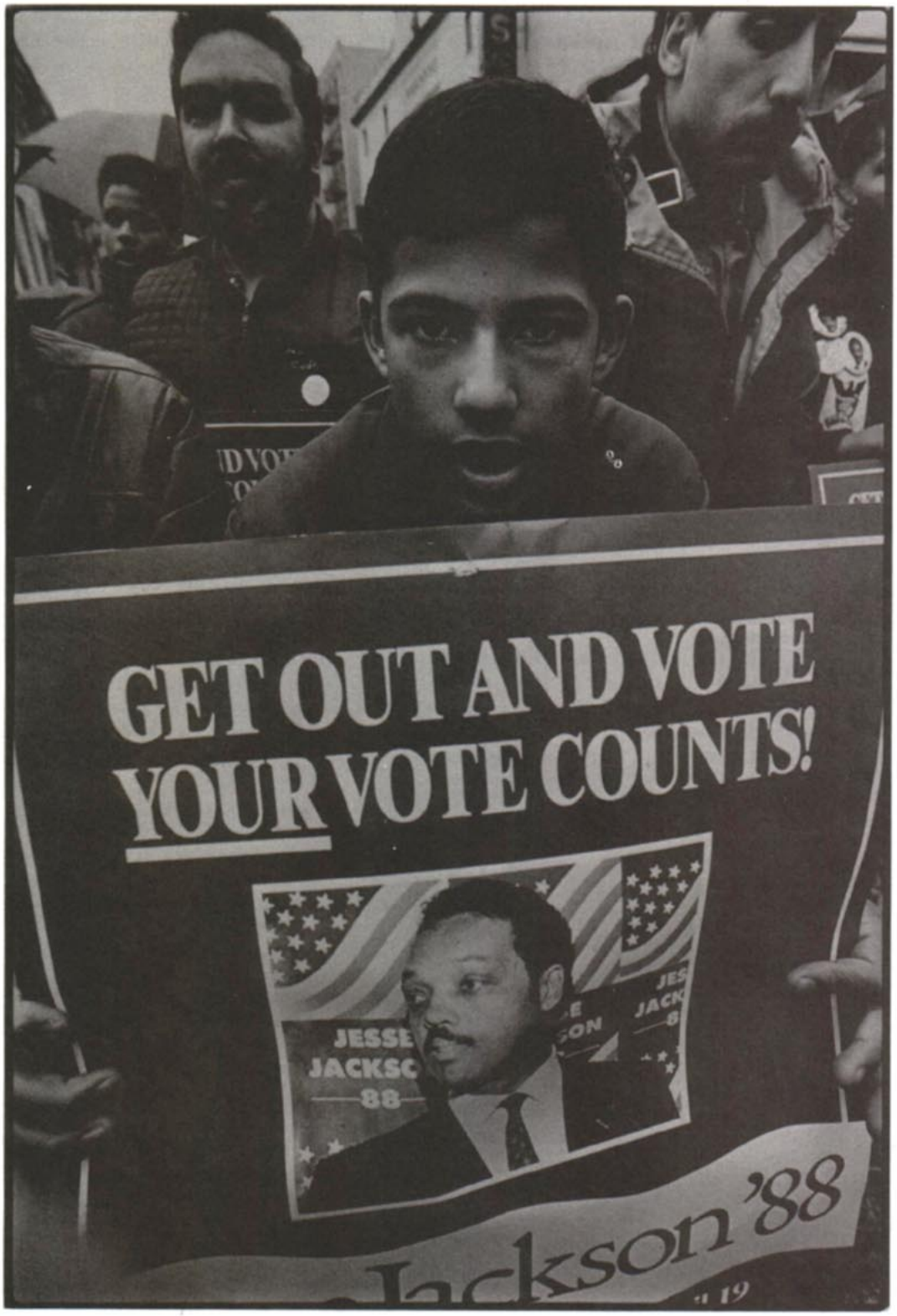

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Harold Meyerson

WHY THE DEMOCRATS KEEP LOSING

The Abandonment of Economic Populism

One of the differences between the two political parties over the past ten years is that the Republican presidential candidates forget many things; the Democrats only one. On a range of questions small and large—the date of Pearl Harbor Day, whether nuclear missiles can be recalled, their own whereabouts in the shipping of arms to Iran—the Republicans are remarkably unretentive. Democratic candidates, by comparison, are masters of detail. Their memory lapses are of a highly rarefied type. They forget only the raison d'être for their candidacy—why they wish to be president.

Michael Dukakis was only the latest in a line of Democratic nominees to flounder in search of a theme. Before Walter Mondale flung himself into the bottomless pit of deficit reductions through tax hikes, his overarching theme was his own experience. "I'm ready!" he would cry at the end of his speeches, begging the question of ready-for-what? In 1980 Jimmy Carter galvanized the electorate around the idea that he was better able than Ronald Reagan to grasp the complexities of the modern world. The candidacy of Carter's 1980 primary challenger, Ted Kennedy, never recovered from the dumbstruck silence with which Kennedy greeted Roger Mudd's question as to why he sought the presidency.

The point is not that Democratic politicians in the top echelon are exceptionally self-destructive; it is something deeper and more ominous. By the mid-seventies the Democrats had come to the end of an epochal project through which they defined and commended themselves to voters for nearly half-a-century. As the eighties end, they have yet to define a new project.

What has shuddered to a halt is the Democrats' capacity to use government to induce a more widely shared prosperity. A globalized economy has substantially nullified the power of government and unions to improve living standards. The unprecedented inflation of the late seventies derailed such Democratic policies as full employment and health insurance. By the late eighties, inflation had long since ceased to spell death to all government programs, but in its stead, the Reagan administration had erected a deficit that had a similarly fatal effect on public sector initiatives. In its political consequences the deficit is the Republicans' continuation of inflation by other means.

Despite a widespread desire for renewed government initiatives in housing, education, health insurance, and the environment, the Democrats in 1988 (with the honorable exception of Jesse Jackson) were unable to offer anything beyond symbolic programs. There was nothing with which a conservative could take issue, wrote Paul Gigot, the *Wall Street Journal*'s reactionary columnist, in the Dukakis education proposal or in what the *New York Times* called "Mr. Dukakis's Modest Housing Plan." Neither was there very much to excite voters. The deficit is a Republican panacea: It renders purely symbolic the rewards of the political sphere (which flow disproportionately

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to Democratic sympathizers) while the rewards of the marketplace (which accrue disproportionately to Republican sympathizers) remain altogether tangible. It removes economic options from political discourse and leaves in their stead a largely cultural politics—sure to bring Democratic disaster.

What is the once hegemonic party of American politics doing in a place like this? Like every other center-left party in advanced industrialized nations, the Democrats have suffered from the diminishing scope of government that has accompanied the globalized economy. But the Democrats are not simply innocent victims of macroeconomic forces, for there are strong elements of self-slaughter in the Democrats' decline. The Democrats over the past several decades have abandoned the kinds of universal social programs, in such areas as housing and health care, that unite middle-class and poor voters, and they have been stunningly indifferent to the disorganization of politics in the bottom half of the socioeconomic spectrum—that is, to the collapse of organized politics in their own political base. Correspondingly, it will require a serious commitment to the policies and institutions of economic populism for the Democrats to be able just to redefine the terms of political engagement. A move to a more conservative cultural politics will in itself not yield very much; a move to an even more explicit economics of "enlightened austerity" will prove a disaster. Difficult though it may be, until the Democrats revive the projects and institutions of a mixed economy, they will be doomed to a succession of nominees unable to articulate a compelling basis for their candidacy. From Carter to Mondale to Dukakis, they have become and are likely to remain the party of unhappy warriors.

One measure of Democratic decline is that the party keeps losing while holding more and more of its base. After a generation of intraparty warfare, Walter Mondale succeeded in uniting the elites of the old politics (the AFL-CIO) with those of the new (the National Organization for Women, the Freeze) in 1984. Dukakis went Mondale one better by drawing a higher share of registered Democrats than any candidate in decades—by some exit polling, nearly 90 percent. The problem, of course, is that the number of Democrats is steadily waning. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents to the CBS/*New York Times* exit poll identified themselves as Democrats this past November—down from 46 percent in 1980 and 53 percent in 1964—while 35 percent identified themselves as Republicans.

More disabling than the loss of the South or any other single factor is the disorganization of the party's working-class base. Over the past thirty years both the rates of working-class voting and unionization have been halved. Where mass-based party structures and unions once provided, however imperfectly, a politics to millions of Americans, today most vehicles of political expression are absent from working-class America, and the contemporary political discourse muffles working-class concerns.

A comparison of the CBS/*New York Times* exit poll on the composition of November's electorate with the Bureau of Labor Statistics' November figures on the composition of the actual voting age population (adjusted from BLS figures on workforce composition) illustrates clearly the extent of working class depoliticization (see table below). Class clearly emerges as a decisive factor in voter participation rates—more so, for instance, than race. In the January–February *Public Opinion* Ruy

Job Category	% of Voting Age Population	% of Actual Electorate	% of Over/Under-Representation in the Electorate
Professional, managerial and teacher	17%	36%	211%
Blue collar	18%	13%	72%
Sales, technical, services, administrative (BLS)/White collar (CBS)	28%	11%	39%

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Teixeira estimates November's white voter turnout at 52 percent, the black at 46 percent.

One reason why blue-collar participation, although still under the norm, so exceeds participation by those in the new service economy is the far higher rate of unionization among blue-collar workers. For all their flaws, union political action programs "work": as in every presidential election since 1964, with the exceptions only of 1972 (which the AFL-CIO sat out) and 1980, this November's union household vote for the Democratic nominee was 12 percent higher than the nominee's overall vote. The disparity grows to 15 percent when white union members are measured against the overall white electorate.

The problem is the declining rate of unionization. My quadrennial best-of-all-possible-worlds rerun demonstrates that if the 1988 election had been conducted with a unionization rate at its postwar high (35 percent) rather than at its current low point (17 percent), the Dukakis-Bentsen ticket would have picked up an additional 4 percent of the vote and likely have won the election.

The political significance of the double decline of parties and unions becomes strikingly apparent in the 1988 election figures from the Latino communities. Polls taken for the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project show Dukakis winning 83 percent of the Latino vote in Texas and 74 percent in California. Yet, according to Teixeira, Latinos voted nationally at a rate of only 23 percent in November. What is notable in the Democrats' failure to mobilize the Latino vote is how meager their efforts are when compared to those of their predecessors in analogous situations. Turn-of-the-century big city machines cultivated a base among working-class and poor immigrant populations not all that politically dissimilar from today's Latinos. Thirty-five years later, the parties had begun to wane, but unions had supplanted them in the wake of the New Deal, bringing into the process millions of industrial workers of Southern and Eastern European descent who had never voted before. Yet the only major organizing among today's new immigrant population is that undertaken by the Catholic Church and affiliated community organizations. The parties are gone, the unions have not figured out how to organize the new sweatshop economy, and the Democrats suffer.

The atrophy of parties and unions also places the Democrats at considerable disadvantage among many of the northern urban ethnics who have come to see the Democrats as representing a politics of favoritism to blacks. Increasingly, the Italian and Polish communities of Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia are voting Republican at the bottom as well as the top of the ticket—though there is evidence that unions can arrest the rightward drift. Two Analysis Group surveys of white members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in Michigan reveal an electorate that was giving only 47 percent of its votes to Dukakis (and 26 percent to Bush) in August, but that ended up voting 62 percent Dukakis, 33 percent Bush in November, after the UAW waged a carefully constructed populist campaign for Dukakis. However, the UAW doesn't have the number of members in Michigan that it had before. "It used to be the Democrats carried the state if our members voted 65 percent for the Democrat," one UAW leader comments. "Today, we have to do a lot better than that."

The 1988 election confirmed that control of the party has decisively passed from its industrial working class to its suburban reformer wing. Dukakis's nomination marked the triumph of a generation of leaders schooled in the New Class reform politics of the sixties, but who cast sixties egalitarianism aside in cementing their suburban bases. The three key figures of neoliberal Democratic politics all first won major statewide office in 1974: Jerry Brown and Michael Dukakis were elected governors of California and Massachusetts respectively, and Gary Hart won his Senate seat. In company with dozens of Democrats who first entered Congress in that Watergate year from historically Republican districts, they stressed a politics of procedural reform, environmental concern, a post–cold war foreign policy, and an opposition to new social spending—in particular, to the universalistic programs Democrats had historically advanced.

The coolness of the neoliberals toward the

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old social democracy and their allegiance to a more carefully targeted, pinch-penny liberalism had the effect of further marginalizing liberal doctrine. For the liberalism that emerges from recent polling of both its critics and its adherents is a doctrine centered around the defense of minority rights: an indispensable component of any civilized society, but absolutely not a basis for organizing a majoritarian political party. To a plurality of respondents to another Analysis Group poll taken last fall, such programs as national health insurance and day care, far from being liberal, were deemed centrist; the L-word was reserved almost entirely for defenders of minorities. Correspondingly, the two groups must heavily identifying themselves as liberal on the CBS exit poll were America's two most self-conscious minorities: Jews and blacks. The poll's correlation between liberalism and class or income ranged from small to nonexistent: The percentage of liberal, blue-collar workers matched exactly that of liberal professionals, and the rate of liberalism among the poorest Americans exceeded that among the wealthiest by a mere 5 percent. Liberalism today is that body of thought that defends the one against the many—*not the many against the powerful*. The specter of the L-word grew only more terrifying after neoliberalism had stripped from it the last vestiges of majoritarian economic content.

For the Sam Nunns, Chuck Robbs, and other conservative critics of minoritarian liberalism, repudiation of liberal doctrine has been the centerpiece of Democratic resurgence. But on each of the three occasions when conservative Democrats returned to the Democratic fold during the 1988 campaigns, the call to which they responded was not conservatism, but populism. The first instance came in Iowa in January, when Richard Gephardt closed from third to first in the Iowa primary by appropriating Jesse Jackson's corporation-bashing. The second instance came in the South in the two weeks before Super Tuesday, when Al Gore won the support of conservative Democrats only after dropping fiscal and foreign policy conservatism and getting in his own anticorporate licks. The third instance came woefully late, in the fall campaign's last two weeks, when Michael Dukakis, finally succumbing to the entreaties of his aides, declared himself to be "on your side" against ill-defined economic powers, thereby narrowing George Bush's margin from 13 to 8 points.

The most prevalent of today's populisms—really a neopopulism—enables the Democrats to sidestep the political constraints imposed by the deficit. They can favor public-interest advocacy without public-sector expenditures. As economic power has reverted from the state back to the corporate sphere, Democratic economics is increasingly directed at pressing corporations to provide the services and augment the living standards to which the welfare state would have addressed itself in earlier times. If health insurance and child care are to be universally provided, many Democrats have concluded, employers will have to do it. (Had the deficit dominated the mid-nineteenth century, public education might have been established as a private responsibility.)

At first glance there need be nothing populist about campaigns to mandate an employer-provided welfare state. Indeed, the Massachusetts campaign for comprehensive health insurance aligned its Democratic champions with big businesses (which already provided health insurance) against the small (which did not). It is only corporate resistance to these initiatives that forces Democratic politicians into defending public interests against the corporate sector. In California last fall a series of initiative campaigns set forth the terms under which the battle for the new "corporate responsibility" will be fought. The insurance, tobacco, and supermarket industries poured well over a hundred million dollars into three separate campaigns against initiatives that threatened them with regulation (the insurance industry) or increased taxes and fees for designated social purposes (tobacco and supermarkets). The victory in particular of Proposition 103 over an insurance industry that in the closing months outspent the proposition's proponents by a margin of $50 million to literally nothing testifies to the depth of public indignation at corporate arrogance.

But the story of Prop. 103 is ultimately a cautionary tale, illustrating the insularity and resistance to populism among Democratic

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officeholders. Although it probably mobilized more voters than any single issue on the California ballot (the presidential contest included) and even though its supporters included disproportionate numbers of working-class and poor voters likely to vote Democratic once at the polls, Prop. 103 was an orphan initiative before its enactment. It was unendorsed, totally unfunded, and ignored in Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) campaigns by Democratic leaders, at the very moment when the Dukakis campaign, quite commendably, was pouring an unprecedented $4.5 million into a field operation to ensure a high turnout among the very voters Prop. 103 would bring to the polls.

The problem was that with few exceptions, California Democratic politicians were beholden financially to the trial lawyers or to the insurance industry itself, each of whom had rival measures on the ballot. Nor was this the full extent of the Democrats' resistance to mass-based politics. By all accounts the $4.5 million GOTV drive, which saw tens of thousands of precinct leaders working the state as it had not been worked in thirty years, elicited remarkably little interest or cooperation from members of Congress and state legislators. From the point of view of the typical Democratic incumbent, a popular mobilization disturbs in-district political tranquility and is utterly unnecessary to assure re-election.

For if there is one massive impediment to revival of a Democratic populism and a mass-participatory politics, it is that district-based Democratic politicians (Republicans, too) no longer face competitive elections. Of the more than four hundred congressional incumbents who stood for re-election last November, only six were defeated, and of these, five were embroiled in major scandals. There was only one "normal" defeat among the more than four hundred races. The forty-two incumbents who sought re-election in California were returned to office with an average vote of 71.5 percent—this in a state that George Bush carried by a scant three points. With Political Action Committees investing huge sums of money in the permanent government and with computer technology bringing a new vigor to the fine art of gerrymandering, the district election has be-

Democratic National Convention, 1988 Donna Binder/IMPACT VISUALS

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come an anomaly in American politics—and the district politician, increasingly an obstacle to efforts to build bridges of program and organization between the party and its base.

So a populist revival is by no means assured—and populism itself is only a halfway house on the road to Democratic recovery. Ultimately, no Democratic (or national) renaissance can be assured without an expansion of any number of public programs, without, that is, the resurrection of progressive taxation—the issue in American politics on which mass and elite opinion are most clearly counterposed. (A February Gallup/*Times-Mirror* poll showed 82 percent support for raising taxes on individuals with incomes over $80,000—an 18 percent increase in nine months—not that you'd ever know this from listening to congressional Democrats on taxes.) And even if the Democrats amazed expectation and sided with the mass on this question, there would remain the challenge of extending the standards of the mixed economy throughout the new world economic structure. No party of government can long maintain its base if the living standards it seeks to improve are undermined by a transnational corporate order.

Which is to say that the Democratic revival is at best a highly iffy proposition. Among Democratic leaders only Jesse Jackson champions the entire panoply of reforms, including the globalization of social democracy. Jackson is the least electable of potential Democratic nominees, but he played a signal role in restoring the populist impulse to Democratic discourse in 1988, and his impact is not likely to diminish in the years immediately ahead.

At the other end of the spectrum, some within the Democratic Leadership Council have begun to champion, at least generically, the kind of universal social programs that unite the middle class with the poor, though they remain lamentably mute about changing the tax structure or taking on the corporate culture or doing anything to suggest they are serious about funding these programs. The even more establishmentarian wisdom that clustered about the National Economic Commission counseled a politics of universal take-away—of deficit reduction through across-the-board austerity.

There is no surer prescription for Democratic disaster than a bipartisan austerity program. With the Bush administration likely to jettison the politically counterproductive hard-right social policies of the Reagan White House, and with the cold war closing up shop, the lines of demarcation between the two parties come down to economics and cultural liberalism. Should the Democrats resist the promptings of populism and join in a policy of kinder, gentler impoverishment, they are ensuring that the defining issues of the next campaign will be such surefire winners as . . . crime and punishment.

The normal Democratic presidencies, we have come to think, are those of Roosevelt through Johnson—administrations that used state power to mitigate the harshness of the market and, however imperfectly, to equalize opportunity. But, in fact, thirty years elapsed between the turn-of-the-century creation of a national corporate economy and the development of a Democratic response. There is no reason whatsoever to think that the Democratic response to the globalization of the corporation will unfold with greater, or even equivalent, speed. In this light, the themelessness of a Carter, a Mondale, a Dukakis is neither an aberration nor a betrayal of Democratic tradition; it simply harks back to pre-1932 Democracy when, as today, there existed neither the base nor the vision to modify the new corporate order. Barring a sharp veer towards populism, it is likely that any Democratic administrations over the next several decades will in economic outlook resemble less the presidencies of the New Deal coalition than they will the presidencies of the half-century preceding it, when presidents of both parties—Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, McKinley, Harding, Coolidge—saw their task as doing as little as possible to impede the normal workings of capitalism. This, indeed, is the new model president that centrist Democrats are commending: a leader unimpeded by a mass base, able to compete with Republicans for elite support, adept in political symbolism, bereft of political substance—a diminished Democrat for an age of pipsqueak presidents. □

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Glasnost Watch

Victoria E. Bonnell

MOSCOW: A VIEW FROM BELOW

Ordinary Life in the Gorbachev Time

Visiting Moscow after an eleven-year absence I was struck first by the freshness in the political atmosphere. The impact of *glasnost* is palpable: People talk in new ways, no longer tremulously, about the deplorable conditions in their country. The culture of deception and fear, lies and whispers, has given way to openness in public and private discourse. The mass media have become so racy that few still listen to "the voices," as foreign Russian-language broadcasts are known in the USSR. The Voice of America, once an object of official vilification, has been invited to open an office in Moscow.

A steep increase in subscriptions to newspapers and journals and the long lines at kiosks indicate that people take a lively interest in the printed word. Far less obvious, though, is the popular reaction to all this—the ways people assess what they read or see on television. Many decades of prevarication and hyperbole have left their mark. Although nearly everyone welcomes *glasnost* to some degree, the reactions to it and to *perestroika* are more varied, complex, and problematic than a Western observer might expect.

One discovery I made is that the optimism in the West about Gorbachev's recent reforms is not quite shared in Moscow. The people I encountered had a worried and skeptical attitude toward *perestroika*—views that were not confined to intellectuals but appeared to prevail among broad strata of the population. It is hard to give a name to this set of attitudes. I refer to it as civic cynicism: a profound mistrust of political authority and official declarations.

I first saw this in 1976 and 1977, when the regime's monopoly on information was beginning to break down. For the first time since the 1920s, and on a radically new scale, people began to learn about life outside Soviet borders by means of shortwave radio broadcasts, foreign travel, and communication with recent Soviet émigrés. This loss of innocence profoundly altered popular standards for comparison; expectations for an improved standard of living rose sharply. When the ability of the regime to deliver fell far short both of these expectations and of extravagant official pronouncements, people became more and more skeptical about the promises and performance of the party-state.*

In the intervening eleven years, the mood of civic cynicism has deepened. And each day it is reinforced by the mass media, which now present scathing indictments of the Soviet system in virtually all its aspects. *Glasnost* is nurturing a mentality of cynicism at the very time when Gorbachev is attempting to create a new kind of idealism aimed at expunging the remnants of Stalinism and bringing the coun-

* In *Moskovskie novosti* (September 11, 1988), the historian Roy Medvedev gave this characterization of popular attitudes under Brezhnev: "Reluctance and inability to do a good job, political passivity and apathy, indifference toward the moral and political values of socialism, the moral degradation of tens of millions of people, a universal reign of mediocrity, a gulf between words and deeds, the encouragement of all sorts of lies—all this crippled the consciousness of an entire generation, which we call—sometimes not without reason—the 'lost generation.' "

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try—materially and spiritually—fully into the modern age.

I say "modern age" because in the Soviet Union premodern features persist within the frame of a modern industrial society. The existence of vast urban centers, a superior space program, and military high-tech go hand in hand with preindustrial time-use (appointments are nearly impossible to schedule), consumption patterns (close to half the family budget goes for food), woefully inadequate health care (only 35 percent of rural district hospitals have hot running water; 17 percent have no running water), and an abysmally low standard of living (per capita individual consumption is about a third what it is in the United States). This incongruity produces painful contradictions. Judging by appearances, the country lags behind the West even more than in 1970 when I made my first trip there. During my recent visit I did not see a single computer; not even the banks have them. Photocopying machines are almost as scarce today as a decade ago; the telephone system is inadequate even for voice, let alone electronic data transmission. The information and communications revolutions have yet to make an appearance in the Soviet Union outside of the space and military sectors.

Civic cynicism thrives on these contradictions, undermining the logic of Gorbachev's strategy for reform. Today, as in the past, major structural changes have been initiated from above by a single formidable leader. But change from above cannot succeed without mobilizing change from below. This is a dilemma explicitly recognized by Gorbachev and some of his major policies can best be understood in this light. The problem he faces has certain similarities to that which confronted Stalin during the first Five Year Plan: how to transform the attitudes and behavior of the Soviet people in behalf of *perestroika* (the term was first used extensively during the first Five Year Plan).

Stalin's solution was to create a new kind of politics based on a combination of dictatorship, terror, *and* mass mobilization. Authoritarian and populist elements were intertwined in the Stalinist system, with participation in mass organizations a critical factor in carrying out the *perestroika* of the 1930s. Stalin utilized popular participation to generate support for the party program while at the same time confining "all forms of public association, discourse, and public action within structures established by the regime."[1] Mass mobilization, together with mass terror, reshaped the politics of millions of Soviet citizens. These attitudes—participation without power, enthusiasm without initiative, authority without responsibility—survived well into the post-Stalin era. This is the legacy with which Gorbachev must contend.

Like Stalin, Gorbachev needs mass mobilization to carry out a vast restructuring of Soviet institutions. His approach, however, calls for a mass mobilization stimulated by policies initiated from above but sustained over the long term by institutional structures that permit autonomous political and social action. In short, it is the opposite of Stalin's recipe. Gorbachev's conception of popular participation places a high premium on the very autonomy of word and deed that the Stalinist system managed to crush for nearly sixty years. And this is precisely the area where Gorbachev's *perestroika,* with reliance on initiative from below to complement changes inaugurated from above, has run into serious obstacles. Bureaucratic intransigence is only one aspect of a monumental problem. Equally threatening is the complex set of popular attitudes—civic cynicism, inertia, and outright resistance—that are reinforced by the experience of everyday life. These have proved particularly resistant to reform.

Struggles of Everyday Life

To date *perestroika* has had little impact on the daily ordeals of ordinary citizens. Boris Yeltsin put the matter clearly at the Nineteenth Party Conference in July 1988: "As a result of restructuring, in three years we have not solved any of the problems that are tangible and real for people, let alone achieved any revolutionary transformations." Though Gorbachev was sharply critical of this statement, the press is filled with detailed reports of the appalling difficulties that people encounter as they

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attempt to feed and clothe themselves and send their children off to school.

The food situation, in particular, has grown steadily worse. I saw stores that had row upon row of empty shelves. The problem is not merely that basic items are in short supply (meat, sugar, milk products, fruits, vegetables, and so on) but that many items have disappeared entirely. Higher quality butter, sour cream, cheese, tea, and many other staples of the Russian diet have been replaced by poor substitutes. Everyone can see the deterioration in the quantity and quality of food products. These hardships, imposed by the scarcity and low quality of food and other basic consumer goods and services, provide the number one topic of conversation among Muscovites. More significant, and entirely unprecedented, both the people and the mass media have begun to perceive this as a systemic problem.

The extraordinary crisis in the material sphere, in combination with the general harshness of the urban environment, makes everyday life in Moscow very Hobbesian—nasty, brutish, and short. The brutishness of public life has intensified in proportion to the conditions of scarcity and the general deterioration of public facilities. The overcrowding, filth, long lines (averaging two to three hours each day for Muscovites), pushing and shoving, and sheer physical exertion required to get through an ordinary day in the capital can scarcely be comprehended by those of us who live in the Western industrialized societies. All of this takes a tremendous toll on people and, in combination with substandard medical care and alcoholism, results in a low life expectancy (the Soviet Union ranks thirty-second in life expectancy out of 126 countries) and a high level of infant mortality (fiftieth in the world, after Mauritius and Barbados).

Daily life resembles a kind of warfare, pitting citizen against citizen in a never-ending series of cruel encounters. As a means of self-defense, people have developed coping mechanisms that allow them to maneuver within established structures. "Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the 'weak' against the 'strong', an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter's tricks, maneuverable, polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries."[2] These words of Michel de Certeau possess a special poignancy, because everyday life has engendered an intricate pattern of "tricks" that include conniving, hoarding and weaseling, and a generally predatory disposition.

To appreciate the significance of such practices we must bear in mind that "the structure of everyday life . . . encourages us to see the whole world as an analogy of our own everyday life."[3] Coping mechanisms, enabling ordinary citizens to "make do," have important social-psychological consequences as well as implications for conduct in the economic and political spheres. The experiences of everyday life in the Soviet Union reinforce attitudes of dependency (it's difficult to feel in control of one's life), degradation (the conditions of daily struggle are exceedingly demeaning), and desperation (no matter how hard one tries, it's difficult to cope with the most basic tasks of daily existence). Rules, both formal and informal, must be outwitted and circumvented. As an *Izvestia* correspondent put it recently: "Is it possible to rear a law-abiding citizen when everyday experience persuades him that he has no rights?" Taken together, these experiences reinforce a profound feeling of powerlessness.

Time and again I asked people why they did not protest certain injustices, why they tolerated misconduct, violations of rules, and preposterous regulations. I was told protest had no effect, that it was impossible to prosecute the guilty party, or to identify the decision-maker. Though there are notable exceptions to this pattern of resignation, such attitudes are widespread among Muscovites. Nor are the reasons difficult to detect. The Stalinist system, even in its post-Stalin manifestations, has never adequately institutionalized methods for obtaining redress of grievances—*any kind of grievances*. The system is so hierarchical and decision-making processes are often so obscure that even when fear plays no role, ordinary citizens believe that the process of redress is fundamentally hopeless, a waste of time.

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Gorbachev has taken steps to promote legal reforms that provide procedures for appealing unlawful actions of officials and establish criminal liability for persecuting people for criticism. But it remains to be seen what practical effect these provisions will have.

An indispensable feature of successful social movements is the identification of "the enemy" in human form. In the Soviet Union today the system operates in such a way that it is difficult, in fact often impossible, to identify who is responsible for a given problem. To be sure, the media have focused public scrutiny and even public abuse on heads of ministries, store managers, and others. But these incidents are still episodic and there is an overwhelming impression that even highly placed officials are themselves cogs in a big impersonal bureaucratic machine. An "invisible" human agency presents a serious obstacle to autonomous political and social action.

Fear of Change

One other circumstance must be overcome by Gorbachev if he is to achieve mobilization on behalf of *perestroika:* the apprehension about, even resistance to, his reforms. The fundamental concern is one of destabilization. In the post-Stalin era there has been an unwritten social contract between the party-state and the population: The regime provides job security, a modest but steady improvement in the material standard of living, and opportunities for social mobility, and in exchange citizens cooperate at the workplace and accept a political system that rules in their name but without their effective participation.

Gorbachev now wants to rewrite the contract and many people fear that they will be victimized by these changes, just as they have been victimized in the past by grand schemes of social engineering. More concretely, the new cost accounting system (*khozrashchet*) means that job security is no longer part of the basic social contract; price reforms involve the abandonment of subsidies for basic food items and the likelihood of serious inflation. In exchange, Gorbachev is offering the possibility of genuine political participation through elections and workplace democracy. It is by no means certain that most people consider this an attractive trade-off.

How has Gorbachev attempted to surmount popular attitudes and practices that stand in the way of implementing *perestroika*? Like Stalin before him, Gorbachev has to find means to change deeply rooted ways of thinking about the world. His options are far more limited than those of the Great Helmsman. He cannot resort to terror, exhortatory propaganda, or mass spectacles. Significantly, the symbols and rituals of authority are in very low profile, while political posters, once ubiquitous, have now virtually disappeared.

Gorbachev has chosen a different path, one without precedent in Soviet experience. Influenced, most likely, by the model of interest-group politics advocated by the prominent sociologist Tatiana Zaslavskaia, he has promoted various reforms designed to democratize party and state institutions and, concomitantly, to encourage the formation of voluntary associations. These reforms recognize that, as Zaslavskaia said in a 1987 interview: "The structure of our society is made up of a great many groups whose statuses differ and which have different (sometimes opposing) interests and goals for which they struggle." Unofficial groups provide an especially important indicator of changes at the grassroots level.

Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville argued that independent voluntary associations were a critical element in democratic societies. Tsarist Russia, as Tocqueville's theory would have predicted, had an exceedingly weak tradition of voluntary association. Craft guilds and mutual aid societies, so widespread in premodern Europe, appeared late in Russia's history and then only under government tutelage. Political parties and trade unions did not come to Russia until the 1905 revolution; parties and unions operated in a very circumscribed environment for only a dozen years, until the February Revolution brought down the autocracy. Following the October Revolution, voluntary associations were gradually absorbed into the one-party system. By the early 1930s, all of them, including the trade unions, had become subordinated to the party-state.

Only toward the end of the Brezhnev era did

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voluntary associations begin to reappear. The late seventies and early eighties witnessed the formation of unofficial clubs among young sports fans, rock music enthusiasts, and others. These clubs, which were permitted to exist without much opposition from the authorities, focused on leisure-time activities and had a rather limited membership. The situation changed dramatically after Gorbachev came to power. More than thirty thousand grassroots organizations had come into existence in the Soviet Union by December 1987. In the fall of 1988 about five hundred unofficial groups were functioning in Moscow and several hundred in Leningrad. Membership in these groups ranges from a few dozen to several thousand.

Most voluntary associations operate on the local level; others, such as the highly successful Popular Front groups in the Baltic states, extend to an entire national republic. Three voluntary associations (devoted to a memorial for Stalin's victims, charity, and cultural preservation) currently have a national constituency. Though initially centered around leisure-time and cultural activities, voluntary associations have rapidly expanded to focus on a wide range of issues that include ecology and political reform. The appearance of politically oriented voluntary associations is certainly one of the most astonishing and potentially significant developments of the past three and a half years.

According to Boris Kagarlitsky, a leader of unofficial socialist clubs in Moscow, political groups have made substantial progress. They operate under such colorful names as "Community," "Salvation," "Epicenter," "Candle," and "Laboratory of Public Self-Management." The movement has proceeded slowly in Moscow but in provincial cities, such as Sverdlovsk and elsewhere, grass-roots political organizations have achieved a considerable following and currently occupy an important position in local politics. In the summer of 1987 a number of these groups formed the Federation of Socialist Clubs.[4]

Ferment at the Base

In contrast to the beginning of the century, Moscow and Leningrad are no longer the centers where dissident activity originates. In the 1980s, it is the periphery that has become the center of autonomous grass-roots movements for political and social change. National republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia) are generating social movements far in advance—numerically, organizationally, programatically—of those in the RSFSR. The Popular Front—a movement on behalf of *perestroika* that includes both party and nonparty elements—has achieved its greatest success not in Moscow, where its goals remain nebulous and its popular base is minuscule, but in the Baltic Republics.

Resolutions adopted by the Nineteenth Party Conference in early July 1988 lent official support to the establishment of voluntary associations "expressing the interests and aspirations of various strata of Soviet society." But the possibilities for grass-roots politics vary tremendously from one city and region to another. Recent press reports indicate that some local authorities are harshly vindictive toward these groups, while others tolerate and even support them. Moreover, not all groups have been accorded the same opportunities for public action. Certain organizations, such as the nonsocialist Democratic Union, have been sharply criticized in the press and severely treated by the authorities. While I was in Moscow a demonstration by this group was brutally dispersed on one occasion and entirely suppressed on another. The Democratic Union continues to function despite severe restrictions on its public activity, but such incidents bring to the surface the deep-seated ambivalence toward autonomous social action on the part of local authorities as well as some citizens. Yet there are indications, even in the capital, that voluntary associations are little by little moving into the interstices of public life.

Soon after my arrival in Moscow I witnessed a public demonstration in Pushkin Square, organized in behalf of a memorial to the victims of Stalinism. Several people stood with a large placard announcing the formation of a fund to build such a memorial, including a museum and library. Another member of the group collected signatures on a petition in support of the project. Police circulated in the area but did not inter-

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fere. An animated group of about one hundred people, some of them passersby, gathered around the organizers. Many signed the petition, a housewife laden with groceries and a young man in a military uniform among them. It was a moving occasion. For more than fifty years, an event of this kind could not take place in the Soviet Union; those who tried to engage in public action were severely punished. And now men and women of all ages openly demonstrated in the capital.

Public demonstrations are still far from routine in the Soviet Union, but their number has been increasing in the past several years. According to V. Kravtsov, the USSR minister of justice, there were more than two hundred and fifty sizable "unauthorized" rallies, processions, and demonstrations in Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, and several other cities between 1986 and 1988. Law enforcement officials as well as some citizens have strong reservations about such activity, but the sanctions for such gatherings remain in force despite a recent law placing new restrictions on the demonstrators.

Nascent Cooperative Movement

Another important type of voluntary association that has appeared during the Gorbachev era is the cooperative, formed for the purpose of carrying on economic activity outside party and state auspices. Like other voluntary associations, cooperatives (involving both consumers and producers) got off to a late start in Tsarist Russia, making rapid strides only after the 1905 revolution. Cooperatives gained major importance following the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921, when Lenin and Bukharin advocated them as a transitional economic form between capitalism and socialism. Consumer, producer, credit, and agricultural cooperatives enjoyed a brief efflorescence in the 1920s and figured prominently in the debate over the future direction of the country's economic development. With Stalin's ascendancy in the late 1920s and the introduction of a centralized economy, the independent cooperative movement was extinguished.

Gorbachev has once again restored legitimacy to the idea of self-managed cooperatives, in fact making them a key element in his strategy for economic revival. His hope is that cooperative forms of private enterprise will bring about a swift improvement in the quantity and quality of goods and services. This policy has begun to yield results, particularly since the enactment of a new Law on Cooperatives in July 1988. By January 1989, there were more than 48,000 cooperatives in the country as a whole. Their activities are wide-ranging: restaurants, cafes, retail sales of clothing, food, and other items, plumbing and other skilled crafts concerned with household repair, typewriter repair, construction, manufacturing, tailoring, credit, car insurance, and rock music.

Like unofficial political groups, cooperatives have developed more slowly in Moscow than in some other areas, such as the Baltics. But the situation in the capital is changing rapidly. Whereas only a few dozen cooperative enterprises existed in Moscow in September 1987, one year later there were more than three thousand. During my visit, cooperative businesses, especially in the retail sector, were springing up in all parts of the city. A colorful cooperative cafe is strategically placed in front of the Intourist Hotel and a posh cooperative restaurant has opened several doors down; cooperatively owned fast-food vans can be seen in the Kremlin park and other recreational spots; cooperatives selling clothing and second-hand goods are visible in many neighborhoods. These privately owned stores, restaurants, and even public toilets were generally cleaner, more hospitable, and more expensive than their counterparts in the state sector.

The public response to cooperatives has been mixed. High prices and lavish profits generate resentment; in many parts of the country, local authorities place obstacles in the path of these fledgling businesses. Cooperatives must contend with a deeply rooted tradition of aversion toward private enterprise, even in its collectivist forms, and toward personal enrichment through such enterprises. Finally, they are not operating within a market economy, which means that they have to wheel and deal in their relations with state suppliers, bureaucrats, and others. What is remarkable is that despite immense legal, fiscal, organizational, and ideological problems, not to speak of the Soviet

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Mafia (yes, Mafia!) that preys on them, the number of cooperatives has been increasing and these businesses are currently taking the first steps toward collective organization.

In June 1988, the Moscow cooperative, *Fakt,* was formed to serve as an information clearinghouse for other cooperatives. Two lobbying groups—*Rossiia* and the Moscow Association of Cooperatives—have recently been created to defend the interests of cooperative businesses against the government, racketeers, and negative public opinion. There is also a new weekly newspaper for coop members, *Vestnik kooperatora*. The advent of a coordinating center, lobbying organizations, and a newspaper indicates that coops, like unofficial political groups, are beginning to achieve significant coordination outside official channels. There can be no doubt that what we see here, still in embryonic form, is the emergence of a civil society in the Soviet Union.

Cooperatives and other kinds of voluntary associations have begun to function as interest groups seeking to influence the direction of public policy and the allocation of resources. Cooperatives played an important part in achieving the withdrawal of a new tax law on private businesses in 1988; ecology and preservation groups have won important victories against local authorities; some groups aiming at political reform have become vociferous participants in the ongoing debate about restructuring party and governmental institutions; the organization seeking a memorial to Stalin's victims has garnered support from several major artistic unions and appears to be succeeding in its aims; the Popular Fronts in the Baltic states are emerging as key players in national politics. Manifestations of autonomous social action betoken a fundamental shift in the orientation of some citizens, away from civic cynicism and toward engagement in civic affairs.

Voluntary associations are still circumscribed and dependent upon official policy. Gorbachev makes appeals for "civic self-affirmation," an "active civic stance," "self-regulation and self-management," and, most often, the exercise of initiative. But paradoxically, the state itself must create a new civil society by opening up a broad sphere for independent organizations and providing the legal and institutional support for these activities. What we are witnessing in the Soviet Union today are the first decisive steps in this direction.

The liberalization in social policy cannot be explained merely as an instrumental aspect of Gorbachev's program for achieving economic reform. Nor is it just a tactical move or a grudging concession to some indigenous or foreign constituency. Gorbachev wants to arouse the population from the paralysis induced by long years of civic cynicism, fear, and general powerlessness; his goal is mobilization without regimentation. The tolerance and encouragement for autonomous organizations and for new forms of public action generated by these organizations is an intrinsic aspect of Gorbachev's strategy for change in the Soviet Union—a sine qua non of its progress. Just as it has been said of early modern Europe: "No bourgeoisie, no democracy," so today we may say of communist societies: "No voluntary associations, no *perestroika*." □

Notes

[1] Michael Gelb, "Mass Politics under Stalin: Party Purges and Industrial Productivity Campaigns in Leningrad, 1928–1941" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1987), p. 12. The author offers a compelling analysis of the way mass participation was engineered in the 1930s.

[2] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven F. Rendall (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984), p. 40.

[3] Agnes Heller, *Everyday Life,* trans. by G.I. Campell (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London and Boston, 1984), p. 52.

[4] Conversation with Kagarlitsky, September 13, 1988. The Declaration of the Federation of Socialist Clubs drawn up at the First Meeting of Informal Associations in Moscow is reprinted in Boris Kagarlitsky, *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State 1917 to the Present* (Verso: London and New York, 1988), pp. 349–352.

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Roy Medvedev

THE SOURCES OF POLITICAL TERROR

A Soviet Writer Looks Back on History

This article is the text of a talk given by the distinguished Soviet historian in Moscow after the showing of a documentary film called Solovki. *"Solovki" is common parlance for the Solovetsk Islands in the White Sea, where some of the first camps for political prisoners in the USSR were located.*—Eds.

It is very difficult to address an audience after a film like the one we have just seen in this large theater, especially since this screening was attended by the few surviving former prisoners of Solovki, who have spoken to us, both from the screen and from this podium. We cannot make the usual comments: "good," "excellent," "interesting." This film is a visual account of the tragedy that our nation endured, a film about the executioners and the victims, about the vileness of some people and the spiritual grandeur of others. It reveals both the power of hypocrisy and the power of truth. It evokes strong and conflicting emotions, and we are all, myself included, still under the sway of those emotions.

Time will be needed to sort through all we have just seen and felt and for each of us to come to some understanding of these unforgettable facts and images. I think this is the first real attempt to depict in film, as comprehensively as possible, the inhumanity of Stalin's camps, Stalin's prisons, Stalin's punitive system, and to show it all in the context of the times: While people were being killed and tortured in Solovki, Stalin was greeting parades of athletes in Red Square. All that elicits our indignation, protest, sorrow. As a historian and philosopher I am used to the language of logic, to generalizations, conclusions, and abstract analysis, and, for that reason, I am not entirely certain that this audience will understand and accept the few remarks I will make.

Academician Likhachev, a former prisoner of Solovki, addressed us here both from the screen and the podium. He told us about one of the cruelest executioners at Solovki, a person who had murdered his own father and who trampled and murdered prisoners. That man is still alive. Older than Likhachev, he walks around Moscow with a cane, his chest covered with medals. In the movie we saw him from the back and the side but were never shown his face. Likhachev says we shouldn't know this man's name, that he has children and grandchildren who would be pained to learn who their grandfather really was.

I cannot agree with that position. There's a wide range of opinion on the subject. Some people call for a public trial of the executioners, of those who are still alive and even of those already dead. They want Kaganovich,* who is still alive, put on trial, and they also want to try Stalin, who has been dead for thirty-five years. I cannot agree with either extreme. If we didn't put Kaganovich on trial thirty years ago, if we didn't try the butcher of Solovki thirty or forty years ago, it's too late to start now. But we cannot forgive their crimes. We must know the names both of the victims and the executioners. And the executioners' children and grandchil-

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dren should know the truth, no matter how painful it may be. Society's ills cannot be healed without that truth.

I've been receiving a lot of mail lately. There have been letters from people who not all that long ago were informers and executioners and letters from active, aggressive Stalinists. I can recognize these people by their style, their special malice, their threats, and also by the fact that none of the letters is signed or has a clear return address. These are anonymous letters written by people who are ready to inform and murder again but who are afraid of *glasnost*, afraid I might quote from their letters and reveal their names.

I also receive letters from the children and relatives of well-known executioners, and they of course cannot write anonymously. I received a letter from Yezhov's* daughter, who now has a different last name. She still loves her father and says that he was a fine and caring person who placed too much trust in Stalin. All that's understandable. But she can't find a single word to say against Yezhov, and is afraid to tell her own children who their grandfather was.

I've received a letter from the son of Grigory Malenkov,* whose crimes were much discussed at the Twenty-Second Party Congress. Malenkov's son is an engineer, and I've been told he is a very good person. He, however, simply refuses to censure his father and tries to deny completely the obvious fact that Malenkov was one of the most active and sinister people in Stalin's entourage. Malenkov is guilty of the death of hundreds of thousands of people—in Belorussia, Armenia, Leningrad. He did not torture and kill people with his own hands, though he was not above attending torture sessions in prison cellars. The son writes that Malenkov was a caring father and affectionate husband, that he was friendly with his neighbors at his dacha, friends who included Chechens, Volga Germans. And because I once mixed up Malenkov's address, saying he lived on Frunze Embankment, not on Frunze Street, the son concludes that I know nothing about Malenkov. But I studied in Leningrad in 1949–1950, that is, just at the time Malenkov was wreaking havoc on the city's intelligentsia and party organization. In our university alone, six of the twelve deans were arrested, as well as many excellent professors, writers, and even dozens of students. And now I am criticized for not knowing exactly where Malenkov met his future wife sixty-five years ago—not in Moscow but in Central Asia!

The same is true of the letters from Mikoyan's* family and those from Stalin's distant relatives. Those letters contain neither malice nor threats but are marked by the desire to escape the past, to forget the past, to maintain emotional comfort. This makes me think of Avel, Varlam's son in the film *Repentance*, and others as well. Goebbels too was a very caring father and affectionate husband; Gaulieter Koch, who annihilated millions of Jews and Poles, was also an exemplary family man; and Hitler loved animals and, as a vegetarian, did not eat meat. The poet Marshak wrote on this subject in 1941 or 1942:

*** Names Cited in This Article**

Lavrenty Beria (1899–1953). Head of Soviet secret police at various points between 1938 and 1953. Executed in 1953.

Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926). Head of secret police under Lenin.

Lazar Kaganovich (1893–). Close associate of Stalin. In charge of railroads. Ousted in 1957.

Grigory Malenkov (1902–1988). Stalin's secretary. Succeeded Stalin as party leader in 1953, then premier until 1955. Ousted by Khrushchev in 1957.

Anastas Mikoyan (1895–1978). Member Politburo 1935–1966. In charge of consumer goods under Stalin. Foreign policy adviser to Khrushchev.

Mikhail Suslov (1902–1982). Politburo's chief ideologist. Instrumental in Khrushchev's ouster.

Yakov Sverdlov (1885–1919). Bolshevik, member of original Central Committee. Brilliant organizer, first Soviet president.

Nikolai Yezhov (1895–1939). Head of Soviet secret police, 1936–1938. Executed in 1939.

Andrei Zheliabov (1851–1881). Member of the executive committee of the "Will of the People." Executed after his assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881.

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I don't need the blood of a ram,
I need the blood of a living man.

Only once have I encountered a woman who broke off all relations with her father when she learned that he was not only a writer and researcher in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism but had also been an NKVD colonel under Yezhov and Beria* and had even tortured his old school friends. His "favorite" torture was to break the fingers on his victims' left hands by slamming a door shut on them. "If you don't talk," he'd warn them, "I'll do the same thing to your right hand." His daughter came to see me. She wasn't happy that I had written about her father but thought it necessary to tell me that she had broken off all relations with him a long time ago.

Other people seek justifications for what their relatives did, but if we are too sparing of their filial feelings, their families may well produce new generations of executioners. There were, of course, a great many informers and executioners. There was also an Executioner-in-Chief, who did not choose the best of people to aid him but, as Mandelstam wrote, "played his games using half-human assistants." There were thousands of petty executioners who beat, tortured, trampled, and finished off prisoners. They were carrying out orders, but, as was observed at the Nuremburg trials, the carrying out of criminal orders does not exempt a person from either moral or legal responsibility.

I repeat: It would be difficult to try these people properly now, and it is not necessary. There's no need to dig them up from their graves—it would mean digging up half the graves in the country. But we must write and speak about those people, name names, and not allow them to hide their faces. Let the children be ashamed of their fathers, let the grandchildren be ashamed of their grandfathers. This is a preventive measure that must be taken for the good of our society.

How Far Back Should We Go?

However, there is a subject even more problematic than the one raised by Academician Likhachev. We have just heard from the writer Volkov, who was at Solovki and spent a total of twenty-seven years as a prisoner. That's an incredible amount of time. I have met only five or six people who were able to survive that long in our monstrously cruel camps and prisons. These people were not arrested in 1937–1938, but in 1926–1927 and, naturally, do not think of Stalin and Stalin's terror as the principal cause of their suffering. Volkov spoke directly about "Lenin's terror," not Stalin's, and thinks we ought to reexamine everything that happened before Stalin as well. The cruel execution of the royal family was also mentioned. I want to be honest about all this: I am not ready to discuss such things. None of us is; we're simply unable to bear a burden like that. So, let's not lump everything together. Let's examine the events of the past in the context of the times; historical truth is always concrete.

One of the speakers today attempted to demonstrate that Lenin wanted to bring the Tsar's family to Moscow in order to put the Tsar on trial there. A special group was sent to Tobolsk for that purpose, and therefore neither Lenin nor Sverdlov* can be accused of the murder of the royal family. This is only partially true, at best. As a historian, I can confirm the fact that the Soviet government did indeed desire to put the Tsar on trial in Moscow and that people were sent to the Urals to take the royal family from a zone where the Bolsheviks were under attack by the Whites. However, the group that was to bring the Tsar to Moscow had also been given secret instructions: If there was any danger of the royal family being seized by the White Guards, the entire family was to be executed. Neither Lenin nor Sverdlov ever condemned the party workers of Ekaterinburg who killed the entire royal family.

But that was a cruel and lawless period, a time of war, and both sides committed great violence. When plundering the estates of landowners, the peasants often murdered all the members of a hated family, but the White armies also killed the majority of the prisoners they took, and not only commissars. There was no time to build prisons during the Civil War. That was how people thought at the time, and it was also the way that previous generations of Russian revolutionaries had thought. When Zheliabov* planted his enormous bomb near the Tsar's dining room, he intended to kill the

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entire royal family, and it was only a matter of chance that he failed—they were a few minutes late for dinner. But how many people in the Tsar's guard were killed by that explosion? And didn't we all learn these lines by Pushkin in school?

I hate you and all your kin,
And with deep joy will look upon
Your utter ruin,
The death of your children.

That sank in deeply and became a part of the consciousness of every generation of Russian revolutionaries. The fighting groups of the SRs (the Socialist Revolutionary party) stalked the royal family. And then there were the atrocities committed by the anarchist-communists. On the other hand, tsarist prisons were no more humane than the enemies of tsardom. At one time we were allied with both the Left SRs and the anarchists. Of course, all this may have been the seeds of Stalin's terror, but there were other possibilities, other alternatives as well. More and deeper understanding is required here. I am unable to speak of "Lenin's terror" and equate it with the others mentioned. War and revolution entail a great many atrocities—why should only the revolutionaries bear responsibility and not those who made the revolution inevitable?

Now, after our historical experience, I know that events have not justified either Lenin's terming the revolution "the holiday of the oppressed" or Marx's dictum that the "proletariat needs thirty or fifty years of civil war to rid it of its faults." Both revolution and civil war are evils engendered by other evils. All war is evil, and when our pilots performed a night bombing raid on an enemy city or a village in Central Asia, they had to be aware that not only the enemy but innocent women and children would also die. There is, however, a difference between the cruelty of war and treacherous murder, mass murder, and torture in peacetime. I don't want to justify everything about Lenin, but I continue to have profound respect for him. And I also want to know the whole truth about Lenin, without any lies or silences. The crimes of Stalin and his executioners grew out of a specific soil. Necessity and predetermination played no role here, contrary to the opinion of many. We must prevent even the slightest possibility of any repetition of those crimes.

When seeing the film on Solovki, one might think these were the limits of horror. In fact, when the prisoners of Solovki read about the Inquisition, they considered it child's play. But later on there were camps much more horrible than Solovki, camps where people were not executed thirty or three hundred at a time, but in batches of thirty thousand. The most fearful place of all was Kolyma, where hundreds of thousands, millions of people died while mining or felling trees. For ten years the camps in Kolyma were simply death factories, and death was more agonizing there than in the gas chambers.

And here in Moscow, during the terrible days of the terror of 1937–38, hundreds upon hundreds of people were executed every day in prison cellars. There was a decree that no one, not even "enemies of the people," was to be executed during the revolutionary holidays so that the executioners could enjoy the holidays too. But, after the holidays, people had to be executed a thousand or more at a time. The crematoria were not able to "process" all the bodies in the course of the night. All this occurred in peacetime, secretly. Of course, even as schoolchildren we knew about the repression taking place in the country, but no one grasped either the magnitude or the monstrousness of the crimes. Even now, there are still many who do not wish to believe it. It's more than the soul and the mind can contain.

All this must be not only condemned but understood. However, the events of the Civil War and revolution do not greatly illuminate the tragedy that occurred thereafter. Yes, much of that tragedy was rooted in the past, and Stalin and his entourage do not bear the sole responsibility for the crimes of the thirties. Too much demagogy went into the formation of the party; its cult of centralization and discipline was too strong. Any reasonable relationship between ends and means was destroyed, and the slogan "everything is moral that is useful to the revolution" arose before Stalin came to power. Neither moral nor political barriers were erected to prevent the triumph of totalitarianism, and, with that in mind, we

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should scrutinize all of Lenin's ideas about building the party and the state. Our analysis should not halt before any authorities. We have no gods, and the truth is higher than any authority. And our experience, our not very attractive historical experience, remains the highest criterion of truth. We cannot recklessly submit to fashion and direct our criticism primarily onto Lenin, but we must analyze his plans and programs. In the last year of his life, Lenin himself saw that the country and the party had started to go in the wrong direction. There is no reason to conceal this, because we must have guarantees that there will be no repetition of the tragedy of Solovki and everything that came after.

Looking at the Lenin Era

Specialists know that the "complete" works of Lenin are not entirely complete. They lack many of his letters to Inessa Armand, letters that speak clearly of his love and affection for her and of their attraction to each other. Those letters show us not Lenin the furious polemicist and determined revolutionary but a person to whom nothing human was alien. Those letters cause us to like Lenin the man, and it was only Suslov's* sanctimoniousness that caused all these letters, already prepared for print, to be excluded from the new edition of Lenin's works. That happened right after Khrushchev was retired. Many, perhaps even the majority, of Lenin's notes to Dzerzhinsky,* were also kept from appearing in the complete works. I have not seen those notes and letters but I believe that they contain many appeals for people to be "spared," "freed," "pardoned," and for "better conditions to be created."

Unfortunately, a great many of us are still not prepared to perceive Lenin's era soberly and judiciously. We have no need of any extremism here, but only harm can come from empty apologetics and the creation of a personality cult alien to the spirit of Leninism itself. I have recently begun publishing articles and was surprised to see that the editor—not the censor but the editor—would cross out even the most modest of my criticisms of Lenin. For example, I said that it was no secret that Lenin was not a model of fair argument when polemicizing with opponents of his party. His articles and speeches are peppered with gratuitous invective and insults. That editor left all my remarks about Stalin but flatly crossed out everything critical about Lenin, stating, "We will not do anything that harms Vladimir Ilyich." He changed my remark that the study of Soviet history should be truthful and honest to: "should display a Leninist sense of truth and honesty."

I published another article in one of the Moscow papers saying that the policy of grain confiscation in May and June 1918 was far from constituting a socialist revolution in the countryside but only hastened the beginning of the Civil War, and at the most inopportune time for the Bolsheviks. But after I had read the proofs, the editors replaced two pages of my article with a text of their own that said exactly the opposite of what I had said—that the Civil War compelled the Bolsheviks to conduct a policy of grain requisition, which is not even true from a purely chronological point of view. They also deleted my quite convincing evidence that the first major trumped-up political trial was not the "Shakty" or "Industrial party" case, but that of the Right SRs in 1922. At the time, Gorky attempted to impede the trial and Lenin wrote that something had to be done to pacify Gorky, who was being "too active." Of course, the editors apologized each time, saying that they had corrected the text in manuscript or in galleys for my own best interests.

In conclusion, I'd like to quote a statement by Lenin that we all know and often cite but do not always follow: "We need the truth, the whole truth, and the truth should not depend on whom it serves." In the case at hand, Lenin was referring both to the Bolshevik party and to himself.

Translated from the Russian by
RICHARD LOURIE □

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David Moberg

HARD TIMES FOR LABOR

Can the Unions Recover?

In the 1920s critics of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) "pointed repeatedly to the same weaknesses: the emphasis on a craft structure, the ignoring of industrial unionism, jurisdictional disputes, inertia in organizing the unorganized, weak or tyrannical or corrupt leadership, philosophic individualism, fraternization with businessmen, and political impotence," observed the historian Irving Bernstein in *The Lean Years*.

Union membership declined sharply during that decade. Unions were unable, often unwilling, to organize the growing new industries and were losing in their old strongholds. There was a succession of hostile, anti-union Republican presidents, including one who had made his fame breaking a public-employee strike. It was a time of rampant individualistic materialism and wild financial speculation. The economic boom was uneven, with agriculture and many industries, like coal and textiles, "sick" from overproduction and low prices long before the Crash.

Many of the biggest employers adopted an "American plan" to crush unions, create the open shop, and break strikes. Others pursued a form of "welfare capitalism," a paternalistic scheme designed to block unions by providing some combination of higher wages, limited employee stock ownership, a measure of job security, discounted basic necessities (housing, medical care), and a personnel system that was more orderly (if still very authoritarian) than the erratic shopfloor autocracy of the foreman. Some unions, under pressure, signed cooperative agreements with companies to improve business efficiency, although Bernstein concluded the effort was a "failure" largely due to weakness. Many labor leaders were more preoccupied with fighting radicals in their ranks than in saving a declining labor movement.

This story has, of course, a happy, if turbulent, sequel as the labor movement surged forward with the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) organizing drive of the thirties. That surge was aided by new labor legislation and, even more, in the 1940s by wartime government encouragement of union recognition to keep war production flowing.

Clearly, there are sharp differences between U.S. unions today and those of the 1920s. Unlike most unions of the twenties, today's unions strongly believe government should help protect workers and regulate the economy. And labor leaders are more united as Democrats, although often divided on Democratic strategy. Still, parallels with the twenties are eerily compelling: membership decline and wage cuts, business attacks, corporate paternalistic alternatives to unions, desperate offers of cooperation from unions, governmental hostility, labor political impotence, and union leadership that too often is a dead weight dragging down any initiative.

Those who take comfort that organized labor somehow managed to bounce back must remember it was far from easy and involved a great upheaval within labor itself. Those who seek recent villains to blame for labor's troubles must come to terms with the deeper roots of the problems. And those who think that the strategies of the thirties will work again are probably half-right at best.

Unions in all industrial capitalist countries have faced hard times during the eighties, but no labor movement has suffered as dramatic a

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loss of numbers, power and influence as U.S. unions have. Yet it is important to remember that the decline started much earlier: In terms of union density (the percentage of the workforce in unions), U.S. labor has been losing ground for the past thirty-five years.

A small academic industry has emerged evaluating the reasons for this decline. Its basic conclusion is that the balance of power has steadily shifted toward business executives who, never happy with unions, increasingly acted to tame, avoid, and, where necessary, crush unions. The balance of power has also shifted as New Deal ideology lost ground even in the Democratic party; the tilt of the law toward unionization was undermined by common-law traditions of the superiority of private property rights; and decades of prosperity and U.S. economic superiority nurtured a revival of the always strong culture of competitive individualism. On top of persisting divisions of race, ethnic-religious heritages, gender, and region, American workers were also increasingly separated by subcultures of occupation, education, and styles of consumption. And by narrowing themselves to a mildly liberal business unionism that rarely challenged assumptions about American economic life, unions have helped dig their own grave.

Labor's predominant focus on negotiating and administering contracts for organized workers delivered well, for a while. But the unions were becoming a smaller island in a larger, increasingly hostile—or indifferent—sea. Labor joined big business in an aggressive foreign policy that was both anticommunist and, by extension, hostile to all Third World efforts at serious economic reform. "Military Keynesianism," indirectly using cold war military spending as an economic pump primer, replaced the left-wing Keynesian strategy of planning for full employment. Labor joined in the extirpation of the left, wiping out not only the Communists, who were frequently discredited by their own actions and even more so by their Soviet model, but also the shreds of socialist thought. Organized labor ceased to be a labor *movement,* in the sense of providing a challenge to the "overall system of social control of economic resources," as French sociologist Alain Touraine defines it.

The relative absence of the left from American life was nothing new, but it is one powerful explanation for the weakness of U.S. unions. Comparing several other industrialized countries, especially Canada, with the United States, sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset has concluded that the weakness of socialism and of trade unionism are associated. The "divergence in the trajectories of union density across the border [of Canada and the United States] reflects the undermining of the social democratic forces unleashed by the Great Depression in the south [the U.S.] and their maintenance in the north [Canada]."

But strong as the values of possessive individualism are, there has always been a countervailing, if weaker, tendency toward community and collective action. The current supremacy of conservatives and business over unions is simply one chapter in an ongoing struggle.

Once the postwar economic boom began running out of steam in the late sixties and early seventies, the isolation of the labor movement caught up with it. Profit rates began to decline; business started seeking scapegoats. As unions tried to protect their members with cost-of-living adjustments, the difference between union and nonunion wages and benefits grew. Especially in the context of a profit squeeze and harsher international competition, that growing wage differential meant more businesses calculated that it paid to avoid or break unions.

By the late seventies and early eighties, with Paul Volcker in command at the Federal Reserve and then Ronald Reagan in the White House, the business cycle was allowed to play itself out with full force. Unions reeled before high unemployment, threatened bankruptcies, and pressures of international competition (worsened by Federal Reserve monetary policies used to break both inflation and the institutional protection of workers' incomes). First, United Auto Worker (UAW) concessions imposed in the Carter administration's Chrysler bailout, then Reagan's breaking of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers (PATCO) strike, set the tone for the decade.

In 1987 only 17 percent of all wage and

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salaried workers belonged to unions, virtually halved from the high point of 1953. The loss of union members during the early eighties recession was predictable, but unions continued to lose ground at nearly the same rate during the long recovery of the mid-eighties.

Was it because of a shift from manufacturing to services? Obviously that change undermined traditional union strongholds, but other countries, such as Canada, have gone through comparable or greater shifts, and their labor movements have grown or held their own. U.S. unions win a higher proportion of representation elections among service than manufacturing workers, but they have simply not made an effort in service industries commensurate with their growth. Was it because of a shift in jobs to the South, to women workers, or to smaller plants? Success rates in union elections are higher in many parts of the South than in old midwestern strongholds; women are at least as willing to join unions as men; and small plants are easier to organize than large ones (although more costly per worker organized), as sociologist Michael Goldfield's studies show.

Drop in Membership

Overwhelmingly, recent studies conclude that growing employer power and resistance to unions is the major reason for the decline in union membership, accounting for one-fourth to half of the drop, according to economists Richard Freeman and James Medoff. But Freeman and Medoff also estimate in *What Do Unions Do?* that one-third of the decline results from the unions' failure to commit enough resources to organizing. Also, in *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States,* Goldfield concluded that unions with a strong tradition of rank-and-file combativeness generally have fared better in their organizing than more conservative or autocratic unions.

Management ploys to beat unions have become notorious: illegally firing pro-union workers (at least one pro-union worker in twenty among those being organized was fired in 1980 for union activity, according to one study), hiring anti-union consultants, barely veiled threats of plant closings, captive-audience talks, one-to-one supervisory anti-union campaigns, lengthy delays in holding elections. The overwhelming majority of studies shows that such tactics are very effective. Even when they win elections, a third of the time unions typically do not get a first contract.

But over the past couple of decades many large corporations have also developed a new, nonunion style of "human resource management" that includes such features as an "open door" complaint system, teamwork, quality-of-worklife programs, encouragement of individual initiative, and flexible work rules. Management has often tried to pay enough and attend enough to complaints to minimize the appeal of unions. Thomas A. Kochan, Harry C. Katz, and Robert McKersie, MIT industrial relations specialists, argue in *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations* that many companies in recent decades fled from or failed to invest in unionized locations, attempting to shift production to new sites where they would head off unionization with this new system. Others, like IBM, succeeded in keeping out unions altogether. Increasingly, in the crisis-ridden eighties, employers have also used the "human resources" model and their own narrow readings of Japanese management style to transform relations with workers at unionized workplaces, usually in the name of meeting competition in the market.

It is easier for workers to confront the boss, say a Henry Ford, or even a big corporation, like GM, or "Giant Mother," than to argue with the dictates of the market. The market appears to render impersonal judgments beyond appeal. But the market is also a proxy for corporate power, and in any case its judgments are made according to certain value-laden assumptions. By their very nature, unions attempt to challenge some of these market assumptions, but the U.S. labor movement rarely made explicit intellectual assaults on these principles. Typically, unions attempt to "take wages out of competition" by enforcing a standard pay rate for an industry. They also attempt to temper the hardships imposed by market fluctuations, redistribute income (for example, between current wages and pensions), guarantee at least a minimal standard of living, and provide a measure of security.

But the rule of the market has hit labor with

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a vengeance. A once-stable corporate world has been broken up by international competition, deregulation, greater mobility of capital, and a new approach to corporate organization (constant reshuffling of assets, outsourcing and subcontracting of work, increased use of temporary and part-time workers). Add to all this the recent "market for corporate control," otherwise known as the Wall Street roulette of takeovers and divestitures.

The net social benefits of this market blitz are probably negative. Managers have had a field day for attacks on workers. Predictably this restructuring through the force of the market is leading to greater economic inequality. But restoring corporate profits through the exercise of power and redistribution of national income away from workers was the name of the game all along.

Unions had often taken advantage of imperfect markets, pushing up wages more easily in oligopolistic or regulated industries. They benefited from dominance of their largely unionized industries in the international market or a domestic market partly insulated from competition by, for example, the cost of shipping heavy products like steel and the American taste for gas-guzzler cars. Once competition rushed through these industries, workers found it hard to defend their past gains. Many people, including lower paid, nonunion workers, had come to blame unions for high prices, even though a stronger case could be made against management. But the losses of union workers were not always the customers' gains, even by the narrowest calculation.

In its most benign strategy, management has tried to recruit workers to cooperate in increasing efficiency through innovations like quality-of-worklife (QWL) programs and work teams. Despite some improvements, these new concepts usually are so restricted that they never deliver on the promise of a dramatically better worklife or tap the productivity gains that seem possible when workers have a real stake in their jobs. On balance, they have served management far better than workers.

The flexibility and sociability of the team naturally appeal to many workers, but the team—like many other new joint programs—is often used as a way of getting workers to supervise each other on behalf of management goals. The flexibility of the teams can increase pressures through what Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter call "management by stress." For example, workers are allowed to stop an auto assembly line when they have problems. But that signal of stress can alert management to the need to fine-tune assignments for the maximum tolerable workloads. For the cost of occasional disruptions, management ultimately can squeeze more out of its workforce.

Unions have been tempted—or pressured—to join in cooperative efforts with management in order to meet competition or to save jobs. In a few cases, such as the Bricklayers and the Clothing and Textile Workers, unions have taken or shared initiative to modernize an industry. But more often, management calls the tune, and unions respond from weakness. The biggest problem with most QWL and work reorganization schemes is that workers as an organized force lose control: Most often it is management that initiates the program, defines the goals, and sets the limits. Often unions find that QWL emerges as a challenge to the union for worker allegiances. The teams or QWL can offer workers a new voice, especially since most unions do not enable workers very much to express their views. Many unions handle complaints in a bureaucratic fashion, often not involving the average worker, who typically does not file many grievances.

Even when the United Auto Workers accepted employee involvement and team approaches, the leadership could never completely agree on strategy and was unwilling to put the issue up for debate and decision by the membership. Instead, the auto companies were able to use market pressures to play local unions against each other to gain concessions. The union still bargained over the terms, but management was in the driver's seat.

One top UAW advocate of QWL reportedly lamented, "We started out trying to be like Sweden, and we ended up like Japan." In Sweden unions have real political and industrial power and have long espoused a socialist philosophy. They also have a clearer conception of what they want to change that would

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benefit both workers and, secondarily, the company. By contrast, Japanese unions are weak, fragmented, and company-oriented.

Unions lost power in the United States in part because they lost ground with the general public, their potential allies, and the Democratic party. Public approval of unions began to fall steadily in the sixties, but after hitting a low point in 1979 began to climb back a bit in the eighties, according to a recent Gallup poll. Perhaps people no longer blame unions for economic problems and increasingly see the need for unions. Yet the public is of at least two minds, liking the general idea of unionism and feeling sympathy for workers but viewing less sympathetically the actuality of unionism and greatly distrusting union leaders. The public has long associated union leaders with crime, corruption, and undemocratic practices.

Increasingly unions have come to seem irrelevant to most people's lives, more ignored than vilified. In the 1984 presidential campaign labor was derided as a special interest; in 1988 it was barely noticeable, although within its own narrowed ranks it ran a far better campaign for Dukakis than the Duke ran for himself.

Ironically, the most forceful public voice on behalf of labor interests comes from outside organized labor: Jesse Jackson, who discovered the working class after his 1984 race. In the 1988 contest he took up the cause of strikers and plant closing victims and campaigned on an innovative "worker bill of rights." Several top union leaders worked closely with Jackson, and others privately cheered his willingness to speak out for workers, even if some loathed his foreign policy ideas.

Despite labor's support for civil rights, with greatly varying degrees of fervor, the black movement since the sixties has largely displaced labor as the central social movement in America. Why labor and the black movement could not have been more closely linked is a monumental question in its own right. But clearly labor lost the intellectual and moral position of liberal-left leadership it had during the New Deal epoch, as students, blacks, antiwar activists, women, and environmentalists captured the day. All those movements, and labor too, would have benefited from closer ties with the unions; the lack of such ties hurt both. As a result, there was no broad, cohesive opposition to the corporate power that devastated labor in the late seventies and eighties.

Can Labor Stop the Decline?

Is there anything the labor movement can do to stop its downward slide? Is there anything it is doing?

Much will depend on economic circumstances out of labor's control. If there is a deep economic crisis in the coming years, many Americans will rediscover the limits of individualism and the need for some kind of communal action. Meanwhile, as the number of poorly paid jobs increases and the number of middle-income jobs shrinks, discontent will grow, giving unions new opportunities.

Unions do have some control over how they will respond to the course the economy takes. There are small signals of potential change now, pointing in different directions. The most important symbolically were reports by the AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work in 1983 and 1985. Finally and reluctantly, top officialdom admitted that organized labor had flaws and needed new strategies. It was an important, if modest, break in the insularity of the labor establishment.

To renew itself, labor must adapt to a changed world: shifting employer strategies for an increasingly global economy, with a more educated, more female, more fragmented workforce, and the greater likelihood of continued market turbulence rather than the relative calm of the twenty-five years after World War II. But some principles are unchanged, and many of the new strategies labor should adopt are updated rediscoveries of ideas long abandoned.

Fundamentally, labor needs two things: (1) a broader, more cohesive base of members and allies and (2) a clearer, more ambitious strategic vision. It's easy to say yet also true that labor must become a *movement* again, challenging the overall social control of economic resources. But those who want such a movement must recognize that inevitably

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unions are also organizations: They have members who want services, existing interests to protect, and bureaucracies that are necessary and need not be evil.

Above all, this means organizing new members. But it also means "unionizing" existing pro forma members and developing greater solidarity among unions and their members. Labor unions need to broaden their conceptions of membership, but they also need to see themselves as one part, albeit large and important, of a broader movement that they rightfully may try to influence but should not try to control.

Strategically, labor must redefine as its goal the old ideal of industrial democracy, expanding it to mean economic democracy and not just workplace issues. An economic democracy recognizes that there are numerous stakeholders beyond the stockholders in business enterprises, especially large ones. These other interests, mainly from the community and the workforce, must have a substantial voice in major economic decisions. In the past union leaders often argued that collective bargaining produces industrial democracy. But what they must recognize is that collective bargaining is only one part of it, and economic democracy must be guaranteed to workers whether they're in unions or not. The more they advocate a comprehensive economic democracy, the more they appear to be speaking on behalf of all workers and all community interests, not simply their own. It is a strategic vision that can help broaden the base and increase the power of labor.

Labor's strategic vision must go beyond the issues of voice and power and lay out the kind of economy it wants. It is in labor's interests to support but also to redirect the competitive forces in the economy. For example, left to its own devices, the market obviously encourages businesses to pollute the environment, but by overwhelming margins Americans now simply will not accept competition that results in pollution. Competition that pays subminimal wages, endangers workers' lives, provides no health insurance or pensions, or provides no transitional pay and training for displaced workers should be equally unacceptable, as Congress finally decided last year with regard to plant closings and mass layoffs made without warning.

Labor should lay out its vision of an economy that relies on increasing both the skill and wages of its workers through constant innovation in products and production processes. Government, labor, universities, and businesses can all be part of more cooperative endeavors to make such innovation continuous, but in order for that to succeed there must be security for workers and limits to the range of competition (focusing on ingenuity, quality, product price, satisfying customer needs, and reducing costs through technological innovation and worker creativity). Borrowing a page from the environmentalists, since cuddly mammals and sparkling lakes evoke more empathy than economically bludgeoned workers, labor strategist Tony Mazzocchi has argued for the creation of a Worker Superfund to provide university education and income support for displaced workers.

There is obviously some overlap of this strategy with contemporary management emphasis on increasing flexibility and innovation. The crucial difference is that labor needs to engage that debate at a strategic level—for individual firms, industries, and the nation as a whole—in order to redefine the "restructuring" of the American economy in a way that maximizes benefits for workers and consumers.

When corporations were winning concessions from labor earlier in the decade, Mazzocchi, now secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, argued for a "campaign for corporate concessions." Frequently, unions have demanded that management trim its own fat first, fought disinvestment from factories in order to head off plant closings, or showed management how it could save money without cutting wages or jobs, as the Machinists did at Eastern Airlines or the Clothing and Textile Workers at Xerox. Worker-owned firms have occasionally demonstrated that plants that management was ready to abandon could be run profitably.

In the long run, unions should shift from their traditional orientation of protecting property rights in jobs toward guaranteed employment for all workers without loss of pay when losing previous jobs. Although some contracts,

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such as in auto, have shifted toward general employment security, they are usually too weak to provide protection. Only a government labor-market policy, such as exists in Sweden, can provide workers with the security and retraining to be able to accept change. As defender of the public, unions must be seen not only as advocates of innovation, increasing productivity, and improved quality but also as the guarantors that workers and consumers will be the primary beneficiaries.

Let us consider a few experiments now underway in light of these goals: first, broadening the labor movement; second, developing a strategic vision of industrial democracy and a more cooperative, secure economy where competition is focused and markets viewed as useful economic tools.

Although the numbers do not yet reflect any great change, there is a new vitality in organizing. An otherwise undemocratic Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union is scoring gains among low-wage service workers by bringing in young, highly motivated college graduates as organizers. Other unions, such as the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), are successfully relying on union workers as volunteer organizers who can talk worker-to-worker about what it means to have a union. SEIU (Service Employees International Union) has linked up with 9 to 5, the working women's organization, so far with limited success in organizing clerical workers. SEIU has also joined forces with ACORN, a low-income community organizing network, to unionize the increasingly numerous, extremely ill-paid home care health workers.

The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which often relies on big-budget, sophisticated television and print-advertising campaigns to organize state employees, crafted at Harvard University a one-on-one campaign in which workers organized for the goals of "self-representation, power, and participation," according to organizer Kristine Rondeau. The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) organizers in the South, like many others, have tried to build a sense of union within textile plants even before an election and have linked themselves with community civil rights efforts and the Jackson campaign. In what has now become standard for many unions, the UFCW, in organizing the notoriously anti-union meatpacker IBP, Inc., employed a many-faceted corporate campaign. The union revealed health and safety violations that led to huge fines, made IBP a major issue in the Iowa Democratic caucuses, and spread the word about IBP's hideous working conditions to dry up the regional labor supply it needed for its high-turnover employment strategy.

Some of the most hopeful trends include the mobilization of rank and filers to organize, links with other community organizers, the use of comprehensive corporate attacks to broaden support, emphasis on building a union through organizing before a representation strike or election rather than just signing up dues-payers, and tailoring campaigns and activities to the diverse needs of varied workers.

Although little has been done so far, the AFL-CIO has recommended extending some form of membership to former union members or other interested workers at nonunion workplaces—the beginnings of a needed break between having a contract and union membership. But the labor movement could make great progress by making full membership available to anyone who wanted to join and by organizing to represent workers at workplaces even where there isn't a pro-union majority (ideally with new legal recognition). Likewise, just as professional associations of public employees, teachers, and nurses have evolved into unions, new professional associations of technical, engineering, computer, and other highly skilled workers could also evolve toward a form of unionism.

Charles Heckscher, formerly with the Communications Workers, argues in *The New Unionism: Employee Involvement in the Changing Corporation* that unions should resemble associations so as to adapt to the new, participatory corporate style he calls "managerialism." These "associational unions" would involve varied employee groupings in multilateral, continuing negotiation about the full range of issues from work life to corporate strategy.

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As a prescription for labor as a whole, Heckscher's ideas seem inappropriate—more a capitulation to management power than a way to create a distinctive, worker-oriented participation. But unions must move away from their traditional bureaucracy and put more decision making directly into the hands of workers. For many workers, especially the better educated, unions are valuable mainly as a way of providing a voice at work, not just letting some official do the talking.

And workers often don't have much of a voice within their own unions, let alone within the workplace. The AFL-CIO report on "The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions" called for improved communication between unions and their members. But it said nothing about the desperate need to expand union democracy, end the tradition of union "one-party government," guarantee open debate, and make it easier for dissident groups to organize. Without greater internal democratization, unions cannot credibly claim to be champions of economic democracy, and many otherwise organizable workers will shun them.

Unions obviously also need drastic labor law changes. First, unions, as in Canada, should be able to win recognition after simply showing membership cards for a majority. (Union membership in Canada has doubled, while it has halved in the United States.) Likewise, employers should be barred from interfering in union organizing drives and required to negotiate contracts after a union is recognized. But without regaining members, power, and allies, labor is not likely to win this legislative battle, and it must first figure out how to organize successfully in a very hostile climate.

In recent years some unions have tried to expand the one-on-one contact lower-level union officials establish with members, soliciting their opinions, talking politics, discussing union issues. The work seems to pay off, but it is costly, time-consuming and sometimes given short shrift. A few union organizers, discouraged by the ineffectiveness of strikes, have mobilized members for innovative, disruptive in-plant tactics or as part of corporate campaigns. Other unions have branched out, working with citizen public interest groups or community movements against plant closings.

Foreign Policy Changes

Last April a group of liberal unions that had already broken with the AFL-CIO's right-wing foreign policy joined with a variety of other groups to protest U.S. policy in Central America and Southern Africa. The AFL-CIO's hawkish foreign policy, which arrogantly tries to impose its conservative model of unionism everywhere despite the obvious failings of the U.S. labor movement, has contributed greatly to labor's isolation from potential allies since the sixties.

One of the most promising efforts that combines rejuvenation of unions and expanding community alliances is the Jobs With Justice campaign, supported by about twenty liberal public service and industrial unions. Tens of thousands of workers have pledged to be ready to stand with other workers in need five times during each year. Unions and community groups have organized protests around flagrant cases of "worker abuse," often mobilizing thousands even in small cities.

Labor has made less progress in developing a strategic vision. But increasingly unions have realized that their collective bargaining efforts are superseded by struggles at other levels. Unions, especially in the airline industry, have attempted to influence potential buyers or made offers themselves during corporate takeover bids. Two unions have filed lawsuits against corporate raiders for illegally interfering with their expected economic advantage by putting their employers "in play" with speculators, leading to heavily leveraged buy-outs and subsequent job loss. Once chary of worker ownership, some unions, like the Steelworkers, have embraced the strategy more enthusiastically as the best way to save jobs.

Many unions are also trying to influence the use of the huge pension funds their bargaining has won. The most significant progress has been made with some multi-employer pension funds where union representatives have equal power with management, especially construction unions using their pensions to develop moderate-income housing or union-labor development projects in anti-union states. Now that pension plans are funding takeover bids that eliminate jobs and undermine contracts, the

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need for greater union control over the funds is even more pressing.

With joint labor-management committees from the shop floor to the corporate level, occasional seats on boards of directors, increasing instances of access to corporate financial records, the unions that remain are helter-skelter becoming part of the strategic management of corporations. This involvement, along with the proliferation of QWL programs, has led to a fruitless debate about cooperative versus adversarial labor relations.

Workers and their unions inevitably cooperate with management to varying degrees, simply by virtue of going to work or making contracts. The important question is not whether to cooperate but on what terms labor and management should cooperate and what power each side has. If management wants labor cooperation, it should agree to make traditional managerial prerogatives a matter of collective bargaining—and labor law needs to be changed to require that. Within the collective bargaining relationship, the terms for cooperation can be set and enforced. But management usually seeks cooperation only when labor is weak.

Beyond the formal structures of conflict-and-cooperation, unions above all need to have a sense of direction about where they want to guide the corporation, its investments, its technology, and its products. Few unions now have the resources to challenge corporate strategies, but the ability to do so is as important as having a research department that understands comparative contract language and wage schedules.

Some union strategists insist that anything other than the old-style approach of "letting management manage and unions grieve (or strike)" inevitably compromises unions. But there is no reason why union dialogue and either conflict or cooperation with the company need compromise unions any more than acceptance of certain language on health and safety. The biggest danger is that there can often be a conflict between what is good for workers in an industry as a whole and what is good for a particular company.

If unions fail to tackle more ambitious bargaining or other strategic interventions in corporate investment decisions, they risk rendering themselves marginal. If they cooperate without having their own agenda and a readiness to fight for their views, they may indeed hand management their own noose.

Cooperation or not, unions must be prepared to criticize corporate shortcomings as part of the effort to deflect attacks on workers as the sole answer to competitive pressures. Much of that already goes on at the shop-floor level, as companies finally try to tap worker expertise. Partly the task for unions is to see that such shop-floor creativity benefits the workers and is not turned against them. Unions cannot be expected to second-guess all corporate decisions or design their products for them, although the workers at Lucas Aerospace in Britain undertook a justly famous project to develop alternative products for their plant. But labor must criticize, bargain, protest, or otherwise influence major decisions on investment, technology, or products that affect workers.

Part of the struggle for economic democracy involves expanding worker rights, such as are provided by laws against discrimination or to protect safety and health, whether or not there is a union present. Heckscher argues for a workplace bill of rights to due process (such as firing only for just cause), speech, association, and information (advance notice of closing being a minimal example). Some union leaders worry that providing such rights by law might make unions unnecessary, but it is more likely that workers will decide that unions are needed to exercise these rights successfully.

In recent years there has also been new attention to labor rights in other countries, including provisions in four different laws governing trade and foreign investment. The United States can suspend trade preferences for countries violating such rights. Although the AFL-CIO has seized upon the provision for its cold war foreign policy (in Nicaragua, for example) and some unions are tempted to use the provision for protectionist ends, the laws could instead be part of a new worldwide effort to strengthen unions.

Unions are starting to link together across boundaries. U.S. unions, for example, pressured Coca-Cola on behalf of Guatemalan

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Coke workers occupying a plant and continue to protest jailing of South African union leaders. Belgian grocery workers recently struck to protest their employer's anti-union policies in the United States. Black South African workers for 3M walked off the job in solidarity with Freehold, New Jersey, workers fighting a plant shutdown. In the face of employers that are increasingly global, any revived labor movement must strengthen such ties and reverse the disastrous course of AFL-CIO foreign policy.

Politically labor and most liberal-left-populist movements (blacks, women, environmentalists, some farm groups, peace and anti-intervention groups, and the other usual suspects) have been tagged as special interests. But as allied forces they are well positioned if they can adopt a common strategy of economic democracy, to claim that they represent the national interest. Despite public deference to business and the market, there is considerable suspicion that big business does not represent the national good.

Labor's complete dependence on the Democratic party, which has drifted away from even a fuzzy, mild social democratic alternative to unrestrained corporate capitalism, obviously has hurt immensely. Rather than fantasize about a labor party or simply accept whatever comes down the party pike, the most productive action would be for labor and allies to form a bloc within the party to push a coherent strategy of economic democracy. At times a few liberal unions have joined groups like the Progressive Alliance and the Democratic Agenda as left pressure groups within the Democratic party, but they have never taken such actions seriously enough and certainly never organized a systematic base within the Democrats. Where labor and groups like environmentalists or community plant-closing organizers now work together, labor was often hostile at first and slow to join. (For example, Steelworkers top officials first fought plant-closing opponents in steelworking communities, only later joining with them. They had no strategy for their industry except to follow the companies' lead and fight for trade protection.) Even now most union efforts to reach out for allies involve the same few, important unions, often against the wishes of the top AFL-CIO leadership.

For every story of hopeful beginnings, there are many more stories of union leaders asleep at the switch, uninspired bureaucrats hunkering down and watching their unions decline, wholesale capitulation to management demands, attempts at backroom deals with business executives, abuse of union resources to fight dissidents, lackluster or nonexistent organizing efforts, suppression of creativity from below, and simple-minded business as usual. Even when unions and the AFL-CIO have recognized their problems or developed new strategies, they have been slow to introduce them. Above all, most union leaders still devote more attention to controlling members than to inspiring and mobilizing them. On balance organized labor is at least in as bad shape as it was in the 1920s.

But there are seeds of a potential new labor movement within the decaying body of the old. As it develops, it will have to come to terms not only with the crises of the past few decades but also with a deep-seated American cultural history of competitive individualism and faith in the ideology of free enterprise. Much as labor must tailor its strategies to accommodate American culture, making guarantees for individual advancement and opportunities for autonomy at work central to its demands, it cannot avoid a direct confrontation with the assumptions of the free market and corporate capitalism. But labor and left political movements throughout the world, most of which have been far more successful in tempering capitalism, are now rethinking their old ideas on the role of the market.

At the very least, labor must limit the range of decisions dictated through the market and focus the competitive market toward constructive ends. If it cannot once again become part of a movement that challenges the overall control of society's basic resources, it is likely to continue its ghostly slide toward the margins of American life. □

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Erazim Kohák

LOOKING BACK AT MUNICH

Are the Lessons Really So Simple?

Fifty years ago Neville Chamberlain emerged from his airplane, gestured with his umbrella, and announced to his anxious countrymen that the abject surrender he had just signed in Munich would assure them what the Prayer Book pleads for, "peace in our time." The major effect of his act was to give both umbrellas and peace a bad name for generations to come. Within a year, the world was at war while the Munich agreement went down in history as proof positive of the futility of concessions and the virtues of uncompromising strength. Its "lesson" has since been invoked to justify causes as diverse as the American intervention in Vietnam, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and opposition to arms control agreements. Nor would it surprise me if, behind the Kremlin's secretive walls, Soviet strategists invoked that lesson to oppose a withdrawal from Afghanistan, Poland, or Hungary, gravely warning of "another Munich."

Yet is the lesson of Munich really so simple, that appeasement is bad and uncompromising strength good? Unquestionably, the Munich agreement was one of the pivotal tragedies of our time. By surrendering Czechoslovakia to Hitler, the Western democracies brought on precisely what they feared. Their surrender broke the back of German opposition to Hitler. It destroyed the one genuinely free, democratic state east of the Rhine and helped discredit democracy in that part of the world. It did not turn Hitler's fury toward the east, only armed him with state-of-the-art weaponry for a war that effectively eliminated both France and the British Empire as world powers and drew Soviet might into the very heart of Europe.

It is, however, far from clear that the outcome would have been significantly different had the allies rejected all compromise and opted for war. The wishful "if only" scenario has traditionally been that German opposition, emboldened by a vigorous French and Czechoslovak attack, would have overthrown Hitler and saved the world the Second World War. The available evidence, however, makes a rather less sanguine scenario more likely. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that the dispirited French draftees would have fought any more vigorously in 1938 than they did a year later. For all their valor, the Czechs in all likelihood would have had their hands too full of their own hostile minorities to mount a vigorous attack on Germany for which they were neither armed nor prepared. Even if France managed to dispatch an expeditionary force to aid them, through the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and Romania, it seems most unlikely that such a force would have arrived in time to be much use. Nor does it seem likely that Stalin would have been willing to provide effective aid—how?—and to withdraw again when done. It seems far more likely that he would have done what he in fact did a year later—allied himself with Hitler to deflect him toward the west, perhaps finishing off Poland along the way.

Unquestionably, the Franco-British attempt at last minute compromise was as contemptible as it was futile, but it seems highly doubtful that an uncompromising stance would have been any more effective. By then, it was simply too late, whether for compromise or force. The

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pieces were all in place, set there by twenty years of French foreign policy. Unquestionably, it would have been more honorable had the West fought rather than surrendered, but it seems doubtful that such a course would have accomplished anything more than to discredit a policy of force as much as the attempt at compromise discredited "appeasement." Thus I would suggest that what is interesting is not what happened at Munich but rather what led to Munich, the entire Franco-British policy on the continent since the end of the war to end all wars.

Interestingly enough, that strategy is marked not by a posture of appeasement but by its very opposite, a policy of uncompromising strength. The centerpiece of that strategy is French policy toward Germany in the wake of its defeat. At that point, there was certainly significant room for "appeasement." Germany was ready for a change. The agony of war and defeat had discredited the arrogant "Prussian" model of German national identity. Had the French followed the policy commended by Abraham Lincoln at the close of America's war between the states—"with malice toward none, with charity toward all"—as the Americans did after the Second World War, Germany might well have responded as it responded to the American strategy and become the democratic core of a Europe at peace.

In 1918, however, the French were in no mood for appeasement. They opted instead for a policy of uncompromising strength, designed to crush and humiliate their erstwhile opponent. Rather than make a mighty effort to encourage and support the new republican government that was struggling to transform Germany, they did everything to undercut it. While a policy of generosity would have at least opened a democratic, peaceful option for Germany, the policy of strength left it with defiance as the only option.

Mutatis mutandis, the same can be said of French policy toward its former ally, Russia. Here, too, the war and the defeat discredited the old regime. Russia, too, was ready for something new. To be sure, in the case of Russia it is far less clear that the country was capable of responding to a policy of generosity. Still, even here it is clear that the policy of strength, including an armed intervention in behalf of the most discredited, most corrupt remnants of the old regime—such as Admiral Kolchak in Siberia—helped mightily to rally the undecided to the Bolshevik cause. Once again, while a policy of generosity might have helped build the preconditions of peace, the policy of strength sowed the seeds of future conflict.

Less dramatically, though for me personally more painfully, similar reflections apply in Czechoslovakia. To be sure, the Czechs were far more victims than villains. They seized no alien territory: The western boundaries of the restored Czech state were what they had been for centuries, at least since the 1350s. Centuries of Austrian rule, however, had encouraged the growth of a strong German minority within the traditional Czech lands. Nor was the incorporation of Slovakia in the Czech cause in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the Czechoslovak state in 1918 an act of aggrandisement as much as an act of generosity: After a millenium of Magyar rule, the Slovaks had little hope of revival without Czech help. The new boundary in the south of Slovakia, where no boundary had existed for a thousand years, did incorporate nearly half a million ethnic Magyars in the republic, though that was far more the work of French military cartographers than of the Czechs. Altogether, the Czechs inherited rather than created their multinational state.

And, again in fairness to the Czechs, the new republic offered its ethnic minorities far more freedom, justice, and opportunity than any of the neighboring states. Given a century of peace, Czechoslovakia might well have become another Switzerland, winning the allegiance of a heterogeneous population for a common ideal. The shift in minority attitudes toward Czechoslovakia during the first ten peaceful years, before the Great Depression and the rise of Hitler put an end to it, does suggest as much.

Yet, here again, generosity toward the minorities—"appeasement," if you wish, bitterly criticized by Czech nationalists—strengthened the new republic; the policy of

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strength, of Czech centralism, strongly encouraged by the French general staff, weakened the support of Czechoslovakia's non-Czech nationalities for the new state. At the time, it did not seem to matter: The Czechs were in charge, enjoying full French support; the others had simply to live with it.

A policy of strength, not of generosity, prepared the way to the dead end of Munich. French policy toward Germany and Russia assured France of two enemies, in place of an enemy and an ally. France responded to the new situation with its system of alliances. Poland and Czechoslovakia were to play the role Russia once played, that of an ally in Germany's rear. However, with Soviet Russia now perceived also as an enemy, they were called upon to play the traditional German role as well, that of a *cordon sanitaire* against possible Russian expansion.

With the revival of German strength, this inner contradiction proved fatal. At Munich, Hitler forced France to choose: should France's allies be used against Germany—or Germany against the Soviet Union? To a great many French, Hitler, however odious, came to appear as a more effective barrier against the Soviets than a democratic Czechoslovakia with its legal Communist party and its treaty with the Soviet Union. There were, to be sure, residual sympathies for Czechoslovak democracy in the way. However, Czechoslovakia's failure to win the allegiance of its minorities offered an excuse. Unconvincing though this excuse was even at the time, the French could console themselves that they were not betraying the Czechs, only redrawing Czechoslovakia's boundaries along ethnic lines. In retrospect, Munich appears less a failure of appeasement than a failure of a particularly disgraceful bit of *Realpolitik*, the failure of a policy based on strength rather than generosity.

Why, though, did France consistently choose a policy—in Germany, in Russia, even in Czechoslovakia—that was bound to generate maximal hostility in situations in which it could have afforded to be generous? Here a philosophical rather than an empirical analysis might prove most helpful—an analysis of the philosophical prism, of the philosophical assumptions about the nature of good and evil through which the French read the lessons of history.

Speaking in rather compressed philosophical shorthand, I would suggest that the conceptual prism that led the West from Versailles to Munich was essentially a Manichean one. It is the assumption that reality is ultimately not one but two, and that history is the story of a basic conflict of two opposed forces, Good and Evil, locked in an ongoing struggle. On such a reading, in any historical situation we are dealing with a conflict between Good and Evil, and any compromise between them is a victory for Evil. For Evil is simply and purely evil, incapable of any goodness. It is incapable of compromising, only of taking advantage of any sign of weakness on the part of the Good. The Good must oppose it relentlessly, uncompromisingly, never yielding an inch. There can be no resolution, beyond victory or defeats in a struggle without compromise and without quarter.

In polarized historical situations, a Manichean perspective can appear quite persuasive. That was how the world in fact appeared to Lenin and, even more so, to his heir and successor, Stalin. In our time, we might very well label it the "Stalinist" rather than Manichean view of history—except that it was a view shared by some of Stalin's most vehement opponents. When John Foster Dulles asserted that "neutrality is treason," he was speaking from a Manichean perspective—and Stalin's policies did much to make it persuasive. Both the reality of the Great War—hostages shot, libraries burned, poison gas released in the trenches—and the rhetoric used to fight the war would certainly have helped convince the French and the Czechs that they were the forces of Good while Germany was simply Evil. Given that conviction, any policy of generosity would have appeared as folly, weakness, and only a policy of strength as realistic. Evil must be crushed.

The Manichean perspective, however, is problematic even on a philosophical level. How is Evil conceivable as a positive force at all? Evil, after all, is the will to destroy: It would self-destruct. We can conceive of Good as a positive force: Good is the affirmation of being. But Evil is negation: How can it even

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define itself? Philosophically, an Augustinian reading is rather more persuasive. Being is one, and it is good. Evil is not an autonomous reality: it is a corruption of the Good. Frustrated in its attempt at self-fulfillment, a part of the Good turns to destruction and so comes to function as Evil.

So stated, the contrast might appear academic to the point of meaninglessness. Consider it, though, in a very ordinary practical application. Anti-Semitism is one of the clearest examples of pure evil I know, a will to destruction. How does it come about? On a Manichean reading, we would have to say that some people simply are anti-Semites, just as others respect their fellow humans; that's the way it is. Anti-Semites are evil, those who oppose anti-Semitism are good, and no compromise between them is permissible. The anti-Semites must simply be crushed. Or, as a German acquaintance told me in 1953, "Germany must free itself of anti-Semitism. All the anti-Semites should be rounded up and shot."

On an Augustinian reading, we would argue differently. Anti-Semitism has no positive reality of its own. It is a vicious perversion of an impulse to good. Specifically, we could argue, humans all seek a sense of their own worth. When they are blocked from achieving it, whether by an oppressive social system or by their own sloth, they seek a substitute in oppressing their fellow humans. In fact, anti-Semitism has been most virulent in oppressed and oppressive societies. Seeking to crush the anti-Semite will make anti-Semitism more virulent. It must be cured.

While in our fiery rhetoric the Manichean/Stalinist perception of evil as a force to be crushed may be popular, in our daily practice it is even more problematic than in philosophy. For one, it is devilishly hard to identify any man or society as the Good, pure and simple. We can always convince ourselves that we represent the Good, but that conviction blinds us and makes it impossible to correct our own flaws. We can likewise always convince ourselves that our opponents are pure Evil, but that makes it incomprehensible why so many people are willing to support them and, still worse, makes it impossible for us to find any strategy for dealing with our opponents other than seeking to crush them. When push comes to shove, such perception becomes fatal, leaving us with only the options of surrender or destruction.

Munich, I would suggest, demonstrated less the bankruptcy of appeasement than the utter self-destructive bankruptcy of the Manichean vision of the world. Certainly, France should have fought, whatever the consequences. Its inept attempt at last-minute appeasement cost it much and won it nothing but contempt. But that is not a lesson we could generalize. There are times to fight and times to make peace. The real lesson of Munich is that the Manichean perception of reality makes it impossible for humans to recognize the needs of a given time and to respond appropriately.

That, unfortunately, is also the unlearned lesson of Munich. Reflections on the Munich Dictate routinely restrict themselves to a rather academic debate about the virtues of war and appeasement as instruments of foreign policy while the world continues to prepare new Munichs: situations in which evil can only be fought—and so triumphs, one way or another. The Lesson of Munich will have been learned only if we ever learn the importance of generosity in curing evil before it becomes so powerful and autonomous that the only option left is to fight it—or surrender to it. □

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The State of Political Theory

Edited by Michael Walzer

INTRODUCTION

More people are working at political theory in the academic world than ever before. The field is thriving, perhaps because there is so little serious thinking and arguing about politics outside the academy. The neoconservative think tanks of the 1970s and early 1980s provide the only recent example of the unity of theory and practice. Leftist and even liberal arguments these days are largely theoretical in character: professors writing for other professors. This is true even of feminism, which one would expect to have significant resonance off-campus. Without that resonance, political theory is a kind of alienated politics, an enterprise carried on at some distance from the activities to which it refers. The result, very often, is endless refinement, esoteric jargon, romantic posturing, and fierce intramural polemic. Nonetheless, interesting work gets done, and if some of it is written in code, it is still possible to detect certain tendencies that may one day have practical impact.

These tendencies suggest some reason for hope—as I think the following brief essays will indicate. I asked each of the authors to write a "report from the field" aimed at lay readers, a report not merely descriptive but also critical, opinionated, partisan. What the reports suggest is a series of convergences: between liberals and socialists, Marxists and pluralists, defenders of community and defenders of individual autonomy. No doubt a different set of authors would have drawn a different picture, for there are still unreconstructed Marxists and radical libertarians at work in political theory—and a variety of "postmodernist" writers who cast doubt on the stability of any possible political commitment. Different versions of conservatism, unrepresented here, are still strongly present, though their strength seems to have fallen off in the course of the Reagan years (not without reason). In any case, the convergences are real, and a renewed sense of the value of liberal and social democracy is their single most important cause.

This sense is perhaps best reflected in John Rawls's theory of justice, the moral influence of which has outlasted strong attacks on its underlying philosophical apparatus. Amy Gutmann's essay provides a sympathetic account of Rawls's impact on political thought. The rest of the essays follow in what I hope is a plausible order. The tribulations of academic Marxism are sketched by David Plotke, who also provides a program for its future. Alan Ryan writes critically about communitarian theories but ends with a quiet communitarianism of his own. Don Herzog reports on a kind of liberalism with which democratic socialists might well feel strong affinities. Sanford Levinson suggests the valuable role that the Critical Legal Studies movement has played within law schools but worries that it points to no form of political or even legal practice. Seyla Benhabib describes and interprets the debates among feminist political theorists and argues herself for a position short of postmodernism—a position that would lie close to those of our other authors.

—M.W.

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Amy Gutmann

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF RAWLS'S THEORY

When John Rawls began writing *A Theory of Justice* in the 1950s, philosophers were busy lamenting the death of political philosophy. Grand political theories, Bernard Crick observed, were treated like "corpses for students to practice dissection upon." Some philosophers, calling themselves "emotivists," elaborated versions of the view that morality is just a matter of opinion. If any systematic view could claim adherents in the academy, it was utilitarianism, which asserted the seemingly simple principle, "maximize social welfare." Utilitarianism was also extremely influential outside the academy. It seemed to provide a straightforward and rigorous method by which public officials could solve hard political problems: for every policy alternative, add up the social benefits, subtract the social costs, and implement the alternative that maximizes net benefits.

The common intuition that the rights of individuals should not be sacrificed for the sake of social welfare somehow persisted alongside the academic ascendancy of utilitarianism—a testimony, perhaps, to the tenacity of our moral intuitions. But believers in rights lacked systematic philosophical arguments against the opposing Benthamite intuition that rights are nothing more than "nonsense on stilts." Rights advocates also lacked a convincing response to the enduring Marxist critique of rights as—not nonsense—but the common sense of capitalism, confusing the class interests of the bourgeoisie with the universal interests of humanity.

Political thinking in the academy has changed since the 1950s and early 1960s in at least three significant ways. First, most rights advocates now embrace part of the Marxist critique and defend not only the traditional list of civil and political liberties but also more equal distributions of income, wealth, education, job opportunities, health care, and other goods essential to secure the welfare and dignity of the disadvantaged. Second, most prominent political philosophers are now rights theorists. Utilitarianism is everywhere on the defensive. Third, grand political theory is once again alive in the academy.

All three of these changes are attributable to the influence of *A Theory of Justice*. Of course, reading Rawls did not suddenly convert utility maximizers and "emotivists" into rights theorists. Some scholars were already searching for a systematic alternative to utilitarianism and emotivism. Many students read Rawls in their philosophically formative years and grew up, as it were, with strong Rawlsian sympathies. Still other, more established scholars first criticized *A Theory of Justice* and then constructed systematic theories to replace it. Most of these (like Ronald Dworkin's theory of equality) resemble Rawls's theory in significant ways, but even those that are radically different would not have been conceived, as Michael Walzer acknowledges in *Spheres of Justice*, without Rawls's work. Rawls's critics pay the greatest tribute to *A Theory of Justice* by affirming Henry James's view that "to criticize is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticized thing and to make it one's own." Among twentieth-century philo-

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sophical works Rawls's theory may be our most common possession.

Joining Socialist Criticism and Liberal Theory

To appreciate the political substance of Rawls's theory, it is best to begin with the first and most specific change that Rawls has wrought: the integration of socialist criticism into liberal theory. *A Theory of Justice* offers no philosophical rationalizations for the interests of any dominant class or group. The first principle of Rawlsian justice—the equal liberty principle—gives priority to securing basic liberal freedoms: freedom of thought, conscience, speech, assembly, universal suffrage, freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure, the right to hold public office and personal property. Conspicuously absent from these basic liberties are capitalist market freedoms: to own commercial property, to appropriate what one has produced, to inherit or to pass on one's possessions. The absence of these freedoms from the list of basic liberties is no oversight or inconsistency on Rawls's part. Unlike the parties to Locke's social contract, Rawlsian "contractors" must choose distributive principles without knowing their relative wealth or their social class. Unaware of whether they are capitalists or workers, they will care more about securing a decent life for themselves and their children than about protecting the profits of property owners.

The second principle of Rawlsian justice has two parts. The first (and most famous) part—the "difference principle"—justifies only those social and economic inequalities that maximize benefits to the least advantaged citizens. The second part requires "fair equality of opportunity" for all, equalizing not only job opportunities but life chances. People with "similar abilities and skills should have similar life chances . . . irrespective of the income class into which they are born."

This is a liberalism for the least advantaged, a liberalism that pays a moral tribute to the socialist critique. The "difference principle" prevents the poor from falling (even into a safety net) so long as it is possible to raise their life prospects higher. Nothing short of securing their highest practicable life prospects will satisfy Rawlsian demands. Similarly, fair equality of opportunity goes far beyond the classical liberal ideal of careers open to talents. It also requires compensatory education and limits on economic inequalities so that "in all sectors of society there should be roughly equal prospects of culture and achievement for everyone similarly motivated and endowed."

Liberals can consistently support the theory's egalitarian economic implications because the first principle, the liberal core of Rawls's theory, rejects equalization at the expense of the basic liberties of any citizen. The income of the least advantaged may not be maximized, for example, by denying freedom of association to professionals or freedom of speech to neoconservatives. Socialists can consistently support the liberalism of the first principle because the second principle (the socialist core of Rawlsian justice) renders liberal freedoms far more than mere formalities for the disadvantaged.

This integration of liberal and socialist principle explains the appeal of Rawlsian principles to left-liberals. Although they find flaws and suggest revisions in the Rawlsian framework, most consider the principles a stimulus to their own thinking about justice. It also explains why *other* liberals and socialists have been more critical of Rawls's theory. Liberals who believe in distribution according to the market or individual desert (or both) have criticized Rawls for not counting the freedom to appropriate the fruits of one's own labor as among the basic liberties. Socialists who believe capitalist ownership of large-scale enterprises to be a postfeudal form of private government have criticized Rawls for leaving the choice between private and collective ownership of large-scale industry open to empirical argument rather than settling it on moral grounds.

Why both libertarians (like Robert Nozick) and democratic socialists (like Walzer) would criticize Rawls's theory is clear enough. Harder to justify are the rejections of Rawls based upon contradictory misrepresentations of Rawlsian principles. Many liberal critics have

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followed Robert Nisbet's reading of Rawls's theory as a radically egalitarian rejection of liberal freedom (reminiscent of Rousseau), while many socialist scholars have followed Norman Daniel's first reading of the theory as yet another liberal rationalization of large-scale inequalities in income, wealth, and power between classes (reminiscent of Locke). It is curious that both sets of critics misrepresent the substance of Rawls's theory in a direction opposite to their own political sympathies. The result has been to stir up old ideological debates between partisans of liberty and equality, individual and community, equality of opportunity and equality of results.

Communitarian Critique

The most recent misrepresentation of Rawls is the communitarian critique. Michael Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* suggest that we must choose between a Rawlsian politics of individual rights, in which atomistic individuals languish without a shared morality, and an Aristotelian politics of the common good, in which solidaristic citizens fare well without the protection of individual rights. It is doubtful that our political alternatives are, or ever were, so stark and simple.

Were Rawls the first philosopher to suggest a way of narrowing the gap between classical liberalism and socialism, the misinterpretation of Rawlsian principles would be less surprising. But he follows a long line of liberal philosophers—John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, T.H. Green, L.T. Hobhouse, R.H. Tawney, John Dewey, among others—who defend a politics explicitly more egalitarian than Lockeanism and explicitly more libertarian than Marxism. The reluctance to accept the political meaning of Rawlsian principles is even harder to explain because on a wide range of political issues—such as compensatory education, equal pay for equal work, national health insurance, antitrust, and plant-closing legislation—many of Rawls's critics support positions that are both politically liberal and economically egalitarian. Ideological divisions of the past die harder in academic discourse than in actual politics.

Yet new philosophical ideas also catch on faster in the academy than in the real world. The Rawlsian idea that was accepted most readily is the "original position," a hypothetical situation in which a "veil of ignorance" deprives us of all knowledge of our natural talents, moral views, and place in the social order so that we can rationally choose principles of justice that are not biased in our own favor. Not knowing my own religion, I will choose a principle of religious toleration to govern society. Not knowing my social class, I will choose principles that guarantee fair equality of opportunity and maximize my life prospects if I turn out to be among the least advantaged citizens. And so will you and so will every other rational person, because in the "original position" there is nothing to distinguish us from each other. There we are all rational choosers. Here (in everyday social life) we are all "free and equal moral persons," led by our sense of "justice as fairness" to accept the "original position" as the fairest way to agree about political principles, to forge a new social contract.

Rawls's revival (and revision) of contract theory gave rise to the second significant change in political thinking in the academy: the ascendancy of rights over utility. Rawls's conception of justice as fairness challenged the dominant utilitarian understanding of how to treat people as equals. Thomas Nagel, T.M. Scanlon, Bernard Williams, and (most recently) Will Kymlicka have elaborated the challenge. Although utilitarians and social-contract theorists are both committed to equality, their commitments differ dramatically. For utilitarians, treating people as equals means counting each person's interests equally in calculations of social welfare. For social contract theorists, it means securing each person's basic interests *against* routine calculations of welfare. Philosophers still contend over which understanding is morally correct, but utilitarianism is now on the defensive against Rawls's argument that contract theory is a better *public* philosophy for a democratic society governed by a bill of rights. Many of our constitutionally guaranteed rights—free speech, religion, press, suffrage, and so on—

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are among those that would be chosen by people in the "original position."

But what about the large bundle of rights necessary to secure fair equality of opportunity and the "difference principle"? Where are these rights to be found in our Constitution? The enormous interest in *A Theory of Justice* among legal scholars has been plausibly attributed to the opportunity it seems to offer American courts to expand the domain of individual rights. Democratic critics point out that such an expansion carries serious moral costs and reveals a significant tension within Rawls's theory: to the extent that courts read more rights into the Constitution, they narrow the domain of democratic decision making created by the fundamental political rights of citizens (to vote, to hold office, to influence public policy, and so on). If Rawls's theory requires such an expansive reading of our rights, the courts could put Congress into receivership. Judges would decide cases in the name of hypothetical rather than actual people.

Scholars allied with the critical legal studies movement carry this challenge one step further. Mark Tushnet and others question whether abstract rights derived from the "original position" (or any other philosophical position) can be translated into something as specific as a legally enforceable right to health care, housing, or a minimum income in the United States today. How much health care, housing, and guaranteed income would satisfy the presumed Rawlsian right? Whom would the courts hold responsible for providing the necessary goods and services? These are not questions that Rawls ever claims to answer. He recognizes, as some of his admirers do not, the intellectual gap that exists between an ideal theory of justice and a theory applicable to any nonideal society.

What, then, is the relevance of justice as fairness for American politics? Does the duty to further Rawlsian principles apply in some special way to judges? Since judges have more political power than the rest of us but less accountability than legislators, a Rawlsian philosopher (concerned to preserve the priority of equal political liberty) might discourage them from recognizing new welfare rights against legislative will. If this is a practical implication of Rawls's theory, then it is more compatible with democratic decision making than its critics suggest. But it is also a less critical conception, at least in its legal implications, than some admirers of Rawls's theory hope.

Or, it may be that Rawlsian judges should be more "activist" and read a defense of welfare rights into the equal protection clause of the Constitution. On this view, the greater power of judges brings with it a greater responsibility than that of ordinary citizens to act on behalf of relatively powerless and poor citizens, especially when legislators fail to fulfill their responsibility to the least advantaged. The legal theorist Frank Michelman concludes that it is quite unclear what Rawlsian judges should do. Michelman's inconclusive conclusion seems correct. The absolute priority of liberty holds only for the ideal world. In our nonideal world, where inadequate education, housing, health care, and income may deprive the disadvantaged of their self-respect (a "primary good" to which Rawls also gives the highest priority), Rawlsian judges face a hard choice between deferring to legislative will (for the sake of equal political liberty) and enforcing welfare rights (for the sake of self-respect, the difference principle, fair equality of opportunity, and the fair value of liberty).

Although Rawls says little about the obligations of judges, legislators, or ordinary citizens in our society, his silence has stimulated scholars in many disciplines—law, philosophy, political science, economics, education, and medicine among others—to delve into issues of practical ethics in the spirit of Rawls's goal "to guide the course of social reform." To be sure, scholars stimulated by Rawls's theory have not singlehandedly (or together) guided the course of social reform. But they have broadly influenced public debates on a wide variety of controversial issues, among them affirmative action for minorities and women, legalization of abortion, distribution of health care and education, prevention of international famine, conscientious objection, civil disobedience, nuclear deterrence and foreign aid, and qualifi-

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cations for appointments to the Supreme Court. Their forays into practical ethics invoke moral considerations similar to Rawls's—what it means to treat people as equals, what kinds of claims can legitimately count as moral arguments in a public forum, whether individual rights or only matters of public policy are at stake, whether a policy endangers the self-respect of citizens—but they rarely reach their conclusions in specific cases without generating new moral distinctions and priority rules, distinctions and rules tailored to the case at hand rather than derivable from an ideal theory of justice, Rawls's or even their own.

A Theory of Justice is still a triumph within the tradition of grand political theory. The triumph rests on more than the philosophical richness, originality, and wisdom that Rawls's work manifests to a degree not seen since John Stuart Mill. It rests on more than its influence in renewing philosophical defenses of human rights. Rawls's most distinctive contribution to the tradition of grand theory is his defense of a method of justification, which he calls "reflective equilibrium."

Grand theorists as different as Plato, Hobbes, and Mill wrote as if their conceptions of justice were justified for all people at all times. They searched for a set of eternal forms, a self-evident truth, or a very simple first principle from which to derive all practical moral imperatives. In defending the method of "reflective equilibrium," Rawls is the most modest, and in this respect wisest, of the grand philosophers. He argues that we have no better way of justifying principles that meet the minimum standards of moral reason (logical consistency, generality, and so on) than by translating the principles into social practices and judging whether the practices are consistent with our moral convictions. If a practice derived from the principles conflicts with a conviction, then we must either reformulate the principle or change our conviction. To decide which course to take, we must use our practical judgment to weigh a variety of considerations (the firmness and consistency of our convictions, the certainty of the principles and of the evidence underlying the practice, and so on). When philosophers sidestep this process of approaching reflective equilibrium, they act on faith rather than reason.

Most philosophers today accept some version of Rawls's method of "reflective equilibrium," but few—including Rawls himself—actually practice it, at least in public. In *A Theory of Justice* and subsequent writings, Rawls stops short of translating his two principles into specific social practices and judging the principles in light of common convictions concerning the practices, even though this step is essential to the method of justification that he defends. The most distinctive principle of Rawls's theory, the "difference principle," is also the most counterintuitive. Is a society unjust if it falls short of *maximizing* benefits to the least advantaged? Outside the "original position," it seems more reasonable to call a society unjust if it fails to provide everyone with decent life prospects (adequate not optimal health care, housing, education, and income) and with the freedoms necessary to participate as an equal citizen in influencing the remaining distributions. The "difference principle" seems not to leave enough moral room for democratic decision making, or for distributions according to desert—not even for Nobel Prizes or Most Valuable Player awards (unless they can be shown to maximize the life prospects of the least advantaged).

But to invoke my intuitions, or anyone else's, against Rawls's does not constitute a devastating criticism of his theory—not only because his intuitions may be morally better, but more important because the method of "reflective equilibrium" welcomes just this kind of criticism. It challenges every critic to offer constructive revisions of justice as fairness, to defend another systematic theory whose premises and conclusions are more intuitively compelling, or to justify something other than a systematic theory (such as a plurality of principles refined and balanced by our practical judgment of particular cases). This is a formidable but fair challenge. An extraordinary number of philosophers, political scientists, economists, and constitutional lawyers have accepted it. □

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David Plotke

MARXISM AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY

A Marxist presence in Anglo-American political theory has grown in the last decade. Marxists have obtained prestigious positions at major universities and had their books issued by influential publishers. On some accounts, there is nothing good in this story—from the left, it means the depoliticizing of Marx; from the right, a threat to our children's education.

If all that had appeared were a technically impressive restatement of orthodox Marxism, the subject would be of no interest and Allan Bloom or William Bennett would have little to worry about. Instead, as Marxism has become more legitimate, its orthodoxies have decayed. The promise of this logic (not the first time for such a cycle) is a fruitful convergence among Marxist, democratic, and liberal theories concerned with a democratic politics in advanced industrial societies.

This article is not a survey of all the new Marxist writing in political theory, much less an account of relations between Marxism and other influential "critical" theories, particularly feminism. The point here is that failed efforts at a new Marxist orthodoxy have opened the way to a creative interaction among theories often considered incompatible.

Despite the new Marxist presence, deep conflicts continue over whether it can produce an adequate contemporary political theory. In classical Marxism, politics expressed class conflict; the state maintained exploitative class relations. The normative horizon was a society without a state in this sense, a harmonious, self-governing unity. Political strategy focused on organizing and mobilizing the working class; given the huge stakes, those engaged in class conflict were obligated to use any means necessary.

These formulations gained a shaky analytical and normative unity by viewing history as leading inevitably toward communism. Marxist political practice would resolve troubling theoretical tensions. If treating politics as class conflict was too crude, Marxism claimed at least to know the key historical process. If the normative vision was vague and even apolitical, Marxism claimed that refusing to specify the future marked it off from utopian speculation. And what else but merciless realism could bring socialist decency to a bloody world?

The modern problem with Marxism is the lack of credibility of its basic vision. Positing a logic of history through which the working class will lead the world to communism now seems unbearably naive, for reasons that range from the bleak course of "state socialist" regimes in the East to deep socioeconomic and political transformations in the West. The separate arguments of the classical synthesis still have value, but reasonable uncertainties about each point interact to multiply doubts. Marxism as an integral theory of the historical present and future is unconvincing even before one judges more limited questions, such as whether Marxist accounts of politics overstate the role of economic variables.

What of Neoorthodoxy?

If "Marxism" means full adherence to the classical synthesis, its endless obituaries would be warranted. Yet Marxisms proliferate as fast as modifiers (quasi-, post-, and so on) are found.

Since World War II the most ambitious and influential effort at renewal was made by the French theorist Louis Althusser. In the 1960s and 1970s he tried to rebuild the classical Marxist theory of society and to restate an

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apparently nonnormative account of how political practices would yield a socialist future. His work was rooted in a political culture for which Marxism was far more important than it has ever been in the United States.

Althusser ruthlessly criticized the humanist and existentialist Marxisms of the postwar years for treating social life as merely the expression of essential principles. Instead, societies are complex structures whose elements are significantly autonomous. Althusser's structuralist arguments provided new grounds for rejecting all moral claims. If history was a process without subjects, political debate could only articulate the class struggle in the realm of theory. Marxists could intervene in—deconstruct!—such debate, their own critical goals being already given by class interests.

These days there are few Althusserians. His notion of economic "determination in the last instance" was criticized as another reduction of politics and culture to the economy. His views of knowledge and agency were said to amount to a cynical instrumentalism: Those with access to Marxist science were entitled to use their privileged knowledge to lead others to make the right history. Michel Foucault radicalized Althusser's antihumanism. He rejected any faith in either a communist future or a true science of history and proposed treating power as primordial and creative. Nicos Poulantzas strained at the limits of economic determinism and challenged Althusser's reassertion of Leninist verities about the state and democracy.

Althusser's theoretical influence within French Marxism made the overall failure of his project very important. More modest efforts to renew orthodoxy have not fared better. G.A. Cohen rebuilds Marxism by stressing the primacy of productive forces. The latter—means of production plus labor power—shape production relations. Production relations in turn "need" a superstructure, and secure it, in order to sustain themselves.

Why do productive forces develop at all? Cohen posits a general human inclination toward rationality and self-improvement and combines this with his technological determinism to assert that history is a natural process

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leading past capitalism toward the new society. This approach opens little analytical space for considering politics in any form. When Cohen treats normative issues as effects of the development of productive forces, the question of "rights" in contemporary capitalism appears only in terms of power relations. Rights are determined by powers, and powers derive from production relations, which in turn express forces of production. This leaves him with little to say about the problems condensed in the term "rights" except that they are located within "basic bourgeois ideology."

Cohen had little to say about politics in his *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense*. He doubtless has views, but the silences of his book suggest the political defects of contemporary efforts to renew Marxist orthodoxy. When one has to guess at the actual politics of a major work, a new separation of Marxist theory from politics has been reached—and Cohen's claim that history will go in the right direction seems gratuitous. The ambition of his book and its analytical earnestness were widely praised, but his arguments rarely accepted. Even a generous view of the merits of his technological determinism will not certify his history of the future.

Orthodox Marxism has long oscillated between a technological and economic emphasis and accounts that give more weight to social relations of production. Within contemporary political theory, one of several serious efforts along the latter lines was Richard Miller's reconstruction of Marx (*Analyzing Marx*), in which relations of production play a central role. They mediate between an economic base and a mainly noneconomic superstructure; thus politics matters for social development by expressing conflicts rooted in relations of production. When Miller applied this view to debates about the state and the distribution of political power, however, the results broke no new ground and supplied little evidence of the value of his approach.

His main question was moral and strategic: If productive forces do not necessarily generate a progressive development, how should social choices be made? Miller proposed (by way of claiming that Marx favored it) a "humane nonmorality." "Morality" is deemed to entail only claims that apply equally to all individuals, are generalizable across societies, and are acceptable to all rational subjects. By this stringent standard, the pragmatic and contextual elements of Marxism disqualify it.

Miller's nonmorality is humane in positing a loosely structured catalogue of general goods that most people prefer. Choices are made through social conflict; thus the problem shifts to analyzing how best to achieve the new society, given a zero-sum struggle for power among differently motivated classes. This boils down to restating the idea of a class morality, grounded in a known logic of historical development.

In the ensuing discussion, few lasting converts to the notion of a class-based "humane nonmorality" were won. Little reflection on current political and social life is needed to make such a position untenable, because its minimum condition—that it be possible analytically and empirically to specify the revolutionary subject in relatively precise terms—is not met. Nonetheless, the weight of such orthodoxy has led many writers, such as Steven Lukes, to feel obligated to write the same argument again and again: Marx had contextual as well as theoretical reasons for rejecting normative debate, but those reasons probably do not hold up today.

To renew orthodoxy either as economic determinism or a reduction of politics to class usually ends up positing a normative stance in favor of "the working class." Where the political scene is dominated by class conflict, this approach at least brushes against real choices. When—as in this society and most like it now—class relations appear as only one among many important political themes, neoorthodoxy has little of normative interest to say.

Beyond Orthodoxy

Not many Marxists are willing to dispose of all these problems by pronouncing that history is indeed moving toward communism, thus allowing one to insist on the primacy of class relations amid admittedly complex conditions. Yet there is much uncertainty about what to put in place of this faith. One result is reticence and

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awkward abstractness about politics so that it can be hard even to guess what a given theorist actually thinks. In a recent book on social democracy in Scandinavia, for example, Gosta Esping-Anderson charged that Adam Przeworski's approach to class formation and to the history of social democracy was Leninist. But he was inferring this, not quoting directly. Later Przeworski indignantly replied that he was not a Leninist, yet still declined to locate himself politically either with respect to the Marxist or any other tradition in a clear way. In such comical exchanges, contemporary Marxists have to guess each other's politics.

Political uncertainty partly expresses theoretical doubt. John Elster's careful evaluation of Marxist theory (*Making Sense of Marx*) ends up rejecting most of orthodox Marxism, and heavily qualifies the rest. His closing announcement of a Marxist commitment is unconvincing by his own standards. Whether or not this was aim, Elster's work helps close the books on neoorthodox Marxism. As few Marxists continue to claim that a scientific knowledge of history allows them to reject the relevance of the problems which preoccupy "bourgeois" democrats, there has been a falling away of barriers between Marxists (also semi-Marxists, post-Marxists, and so on) and various strands of contemporary democratic theory.

Rights and Conditions

A number of important recent works whose points of reference are more or less Marxist have shown a willingness to take up old questions freshly and to address normative issues. Issues about the contemporary meaning of democracy persistently arise for both Marxist and liberal theories, given the decline of legislatures and mass parties, the rise of conservative antistatism, and wide changes in social life that both weaken conventional political actors and encourage new forces.

There is a promising junction where Marxist and liberal-democratic theories can meet, argue, and perhaps undergo major changes. At this junction, contemporary problems about democracy appear theoretically as questions about how to relate rights and conditions. Rights are central in liberal discourse about politics, while Marxists stress the role of (crucially socioeconomic) conditions for the prospects of a good political order.

Some of the current debate just restates old accusations, but there is also real dialogue and genuine movement. Marxists still charge liberal theorists with failing to take seriously the gulf between political rights and actual power relations. Inequalities of power frame the exercise of political rights and liberties so as to undermine the latter. Although a liberal regime of rights does not equal an authoritarian regime, class relations so constrain the exercise of rights that liberalism's core claims cannot be sustained.

Does liberalism lack a commitment to realizing conditions where citizens would have sufficiently equal resources with which to employ their rights actively? More provocatively, does it express a strategy of complicity in class relations, as the individualizing effects of the liberal state disorganize the subordinate classes?

Much liberal-democratic theory now treats relations between political rights and social and political conditions as problematic. John Rawls's distinction between liberty and worth of liberty and Ronald Dworkin's inquiry into relations between equal rights and equal resources underline this recognition. The general prescription of the part of Anglo-American liberal theory that has moved toward an "advanced" social liberalism is a market-based economy regulated by a state charged with extensive social welfare provision. The claim is that this model can link rights and conditions without jeopardizing liberty.

But liberal treatments of rights and conditions remain inadequate. Most liberal regimes are accompanied by high levels of social inequality, and many by major class-linked differences in the extent and efficacy of political participation, even if the extension of rights continues (and expands in response to new social and political movements). To the extent that liberals recognize these realities as theoretically salient, and Marxists decline simply to say "socialism" as a way of addressing them, there is considerable potential

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for a new dialogue. Yet when liberal theorists assume current regimes of rights as their framework, they still tend to focus more on identifying rights than on evaluating their practical meaning. This abstracting of rights from conditions privileges the first of two key questions: What social and political conditions will secure a stable regime of rights? What social and political conditions allow a regime of rights to sustain autonomy and develop capacities for self-determination?

The first question alone—how can a regime of rights be sustained?—can allow a complacent claim that political and socioeconomic inequalities do not jeopardize rights, now redefined as state guarantees that actions by specified agents will not meet overt violence. The second question remains hard for many liberals to take seriously. But a moment's thought about "state socialist" regimes in Eastern Europe makes the issue clear. In such regimes, rights are prescribed extensively, and institutions are charged with protecting them. Here liberals argue that social and political conditions make these rights purely formal, while a reconstruction of conditions is required for rights really to exist.

When liberal theorists acknowledge the second question—what makes rights meaningful as capacities for autonomous action?—it opens inquiry into the political effects of political and socioeconomic relations. Here a productive encounter with Marxist theory can occur as both traditions face the problem of specifying the conditions in which bearers of rights can function with the autonomy and dignity those rights are supposed to register. For those whose points of reference are mainly Marxist and socialist, taking both questions seriously means directly engaging in normative discourse; taking up problems of institutional design, rather than postponing them toward an indefinite benign future; and arguing about political relations among diverse forces in democratic political blocs, without granting any force a priori primacy.

New Debates

Recent significant Marx-oriented work in political and social theory converges with liberal and democratic theories on common problems about how to define contemporary relations between rights and conditions. The work of John Roemer and several associates enters the same terrain as that of Rawls and Robert Nozick in analyzing relations between equality and liberty. Roemer argues for a much more thorough equality of conditions than Rawls, claiming it is necessary to realize the core promises of liberal theory about individual autonomy and opportunity. His arguments are insufficiently sensitive to problems involving the means of equalization, and he does not specify how much equalization of conditions is politically required. But he makes a strong case for equality of conditions as a basis for equal liberty.

The recent work of Jürgen Habermas tries to honor the aims of analytical clarity and generality that motivate contractarian theories—accounts of politics that start with an abstract choice situation in which imagined individuals try to reach agreement on the design of a political order compatible with their essential interests. At the same time, Habermas tries to ground political norms in the conventions of actual communities. To combine the two, he posits an ideal speech situation (an ideal community, without domination) in which participants recognize common interests in reaching agreement on the best argument. The premise is a dualistic reworking of the Marxist tradition in which labor and communication are posited as basic human capacities; the focus on communication gives norms a central role. The ideal speech situation echoes Marxist visions of the future, while providing normative grounds for opposing forces that impede communication now.

A third stream of Marx-inspired work directly takes up questions of institutional design. Claims about what is possible "under socialism" now have to be justified persuasively, not simply stated as the obverse of capitalist problems. Carmen Sirianni has analyzed how work and time might be organized in an egalitarian and developmental fashion. Alec Nove has posed a model of socialist economic relations to integrate market elements and democratic planning mechanisms. Roberto Unger has amplified the modernist side of the

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Marxist tradition in arguing for a fluid, diverse social order.

These and other attempts at institutional design abandon the Marxist conventions by which such efforts were long rejected. As the limits to reform within contemporary capitalism are uncertain, and in the United States not close at hand, it is reasonable to propose deep changes in work or the form of political institutions without wholly prejudging when major elements of such changes could be implemented. Recent efforts at democratic design by Frank Cunningham, David Held, and John Keane address the institutional forms of democratic control in advanced societies.

Finally, a number of works strongly influenced by Marxism have raised anew the question of political strategy. What replaces the classical vision in which the role of the working class as the agent of transformation is given by socioeconomic relations? The claim that political appeals succeed on their merits, simply on the basis of their depth and persuasiveness, seems wishful.

In rethinking strategic questions, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's recent *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* stands out. The authors start from Gramsci to discuss political identities and alliances. They argue that diverse social relations—class, gender, ethnicity—can be the basis of democratically oriented political identities; such identities can be linked in an always unstable but nonetheless effective political bloc. Their thorough critique of Marxist orthodoxy opens a space between determinism and a purely voluntaristic account of politics.

Laclau and Mouffe want their critique of classical Marxism to begin a dialogue with "poststructuralist" views that treat political life as fluid, volatile, and permeable—lacking a definite center or predefined stakes of conflict. Such views reject what are seen as rigid and rationalistic conceptions of the subject—in their place, some offer a view of the subject as more flexible and spontaneous in its forms, while others pursue their critique until the subject has become an arbitrary, transient point whose tenuous unity lies mainly in the forces of power that construct it. When agency disappears altogether, the resulting debate is likely to be an unproductive rerun of arguments about Althusserian antihumanism. Yet poststructuralist accounts are useful in clearing away the confusions of orthodox Marxism. And meeting their challenges may compel Laclau and Mouffe to examine how the relatively stable political identities are achieved that seem still to anchor democratic politics.

Most of these theoretical efforts show the marks of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, whose democratic and egalitarian aims are theoretically pertinent, even if they achieved less than their proponents had hoped. As such efforts leave Marxist orthodoxy behind, the way is open for genuinely new encounters with non-Marxist liberal and democratic theories, with the prospect of real advances beyond what has been achieved in either liberal or Marxist theorizing.

Choosing One's Fight

Hybrid efforts have met considerable criticism. In the dense politics of contemporary political theory, centrist or conservative liberals often attack quasi-Marxist democratic theory as utopian, hyperradical, and vague. Unger's recent work has been received this way. At the same time, orthodox Marxists denounce renegacy and impugn its motives, as in the bullying critiques of Laclau and Mouffe's work published in *New Left Review*.

It is easy enough to agree that Unger's writing is vague and grandiose, or that Laclau and Mouffe risk denying the possibility of a causal account of social processes. But such points are not really the point. Both for conservative liberals and orthodox Marxists, there is a great deal at stake in preserving a sharp boundary between liberal and Marxist theory. For the former, orthodox Marxism is a useful point of negative reference. When relations between rights and conditions are sharply interrogated and democratic initiatives are proposed, such efforts can be stigmatized as naive, even antipolitical and illiberal insofar as they head down the slippery slope to Marxist instrumentalism. For orthodox Marxists, a bright line between liberalism and Marxism can best be drawn if no category of democratic theory (without a class label) is even acknowl-

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edged. Drawing such a line secures a political and theoretical identity, though at the cost of enduring marginality.

In the politics of theory, the lack of definitive solutions means that conditional advances often derive from choices about whom to argue with. The preceding account suggests that just about everything of merit to be gained by debating Marxist orthodoxy has been accomplished. The positions and concepts required to deal with contemporary problems of democracy are more likely to emerge from encounters between unorthodox Marxisms (quasi-, post-, and so on) and non-Marxist democratic theories. To choose such debates is to pose a political and theoretical objective: to redraw boundaries so that major parts of the Marxist tradition (Gramscian, for short) and the more democratic strands of the liberal-democratic tradition are drawn together by common concerns and overlapping substantive positions. To redraw and sometimes blur boundaries will produce no automatic agreements, but better and more productive arguments—for example, between those whose democratic proposals center on change and development and those who favor deepening the egalitarian elements of existing communities.

Naming names, Cohen and some of his colleagues need to be arguing with Dworkin and Rawls about relations among various equalities and between rights and conditions. Habermas and his followers, deeply committed to modernity, need to be arguing with communitarian political theorists and cultural critics such as Michael Sandel and Robert Bellah. Sirianni and Unger should be debating liberal theorists such as Robert Dahl about the appropriate institutional mechanisms for sustaining advanced forms of democracy. And Laclau and Mouffe should be engaged with democratic pluralists and feminists. Orthodox Marxists (now often Trotskyists of one sort or another) can reassure themselves by denouncing the very idea of post-Marxism.

In these dialogues (some underway, others prospective), those whose referents are Marxist can help shape new democratic positions, as unexpected convergences (and disagreements) occur. For example, within liberalism, contractarian positions have recently drawn much criticism as too abstract, procedural, and individualistic, not paying enough attention to the concrete commitments and experiences from which individuals draw their political vocabulary and their capacity to engage in politics. This "communitarian" argument seems to be in harmony with a long history of criticism of the abstractly individualistic side of liberalism, and thus it might seem obvious that Marxists and others who have made such criticism would favor communitarian arguments. Indeed, such appreciation of the arguments of Sandel or Charles Taylor has occurred. At second glance, however, similarities between communitarianism and orthodox Marxism seem troubling. If one translates community as class, claims about anchoring knowledge in collective experience, tying individual life plans to collective aspirations, and defining substantive goals with reference to communal needs are quite familiar. Their very familiarity means doubt about whether communitarian formulas are feasible or attractive in an advanced society, ruling out any easy Marxian appropriation of communitarian views.

How those who take the Marxist tradition as a major referent should assess communitarian arguments exemplifies the many questions where debate can become lively and productive. What is exciting is the prospect of unexpected turns, new formulations, real theoretical advances. This prospect is vastly more appealing than another round of recrimination between orthodox Marxism and conservative liberalism, in which conventional positions are restated mainly for the purpose of cementing deservedly precarious commitments. The costs of what will be a series of sometimes awkward and uncertain encounters—disciplinary confusion, uncertainty about where to place new positions, bitter attacks from orthodox Marxists and conservative liberals—seem modest and well worth paying. □

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Alan Ryan

COMMUNITARIANISM: THE GOOD, THE BAD, & THE MUDDLY

What follows may sometimes sound an irritated note. I am sorry about that, but have to admit that it is one of the objects of this essay to express a certain irritation with the terms in which some recent debates have been handled—terms that make it much harder than it need be to size up the attraction of appeals to "community" and associated ideas.

The meaning of that proposition may be obscure to anyone who has not spent the past decade acquiring the same irritation at the way academic political theory has revolved around the so-called "liberal-communitarian debate." (Anyone who has moved in these circles should proceed swiftly to the paragraph after next.) Academic political theory has for two decades operated under the shadow of John Rawls's wonderful book, *A Theory of Justice;* that book provides a sustained and often moving defense of welfare-state liberalism, a liberalism committed to a conception of distributive justice that seeks to make the least favored citizen as well off as possible, subject to the overriding claims of the widest possible equal liberty for all. Its concern for liberty marks it as a liberal theory, eager to keep the government out of bedroom and library; its so-called "maximin" conception of justice—*max*imizing the *min*imum share of social benefits—marks it out as a welfare-state theory unbothered by the pretensions of property owners to have first claim on the social product. But it was a wonderfully confusing book; the first third of the book argued for this view of justice by showing that rational, self-interested individuals would have drawn up a social contract embodying such a view; the last third, reached by few readers of this 554-page book, tried to show that around such a view a coherent but plural society could form.

So-called "communitarian" critics seized on the first third and argued that the rational egoist of this moral theory (and of most economic theory, too) was a fiction and an unhelpful one. Individuals exist only to the degree that they are formed by society; their morally interesting qualities are those they actually possess, not those they might be hypothesized to possess if they were to lose most of what makes people recognizably human. These complaints, spelled out in Michael Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice,* were, of course, the common coin of nineteenth-century critics of Kant on the one hand and Bentham on the other. They are not, however, complaints against *liberalism*. They are not, indeed, complaints that would hold against the final stages of Rawls's argument in *A Theory of Justice,* where it is the socially unifying qualities of justice that matter. What confuses matters is the (contingent) fact that several of the best known writers in a communitarian vein, such as Sandel, Michael Walzer, Robert Bellah, and Charles Taylor are critical of various forms, or various aspects of liberalism too. Most of them rate the "maximin" conception of justice less highly than Rawls does; Sandel proposes fraternity rather than justice as the fundamental social value, while Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* declines to nominate one value as paramount, and insists that in a plural society, justice too must be plural.

The simple point, however, is that "communitarian liberal" is so far from being a

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contradiction in terms that numerous distinguished and less distinguished writers over the past two centuries have precisely been communitarian liberals. In the United States Edmund Burke has been hijacked by assorted conservatives, but in Britain he is properly recognized as a liberal. His communitarianism sometimes collapsed into mere mindless conservatism, but was most interesting when it was most obviously rooted in liberal values. His defense of community prejudice against radical reliance on individual reason was founded on a fear that the twentieth century has done much to justify: the fear that rationalizing and centralizing political projects would destroy individual liberties more effectively than any traditional government had ever done. Turn of the century "English Idealists"—who were mostly Scottish but, more important, Hegelian—were self-conscious communitarian liberals; T.H. Green educated half a generation of senior clergy and civil servants to think in such terms. William Beveridge built the post-1945 British welfare state on just these ideological foundations. Whatever the relationship between communitarianism and liberalism, it cannot be one of simple opposition. John Stuart Mill, after all, tried to teach the nineteenth century that an adequate liberalism needed Coleridge as well as Bentham—the emphasis on the communal and the cultural to balance the emphasis on the individual and the rational.

Methodological Critique

If the idea of a "communitarian critique of liberalism" makes little sense, we have to look elsewhere for the real argument. There are in fact dozens of real arguments lurking behind the one false façade, but three large topics dominate the field and on all of them communitarianism has something interesting and persuasive, though nothing conclusive, to say. The first and most esoteric issue is the issue of method. It is an exceedingly old and still unresolved question how far moral and political theory should consider men "as if new sprung from the earth like mushrooms"—in Hobbes's graphic phrase—or as fully socialized, committed, concrete, and particular persons, firmly situated in some particular place and at some particular time. The problems of extreme positions are obvious: The fate and interests of the "abstract individual" can concern us only to the extent that they mirror our own concerns. Where, save in the concerns of our present, concrete selves can we find the questions we address to Hobbes's "mushrooms"? With what, other than the mental and moral qualities we find in our present, concrete selves, can we equip them? Conversely, we must give ourselves some distance from those concerns if we are to gain any argumentative perspective on the concrete world; if we limit our gaze to the fully socialized and concrete persons on which communitarians concentrate, what room is there for radical criticism of their thoughts and actions? And how can we even characterize their actual thoughts and actions without some abstraction, some attempt to determine what they would, or should, believe and pursue if they had not been socialized into the outlooks they in fact possess?

This seems to be a valid complaint against explanatory holism. Normatively, the same case is inescapable; no social critic wishes merely to reendorse the beliefs and practices of those in whose welfare he is interested. But this demands some external critical standpoint, even if this standpoint cannot be Henry Sidgwick's vision of the ideal stance to be adopted by the moral philosopher—"the point of view of the universe."

There are many ways of proceeding from here, few of them likely to provoke much dispute in the abstract, most of them likely to provoke a lot when it comes down to cases. One familiar line of thought is to suggest that the social critic must work within the values of the society he criticizes, whether by holding up the society's behavior to the unflattering light of its convictions or by displaying the lacunae and contradictions in its convictions themselves. Such unlikely combinations as T.H. Green and Michael Walzer can be appealed to in aid of the thought that societies have as it were "better selves" to which they can be recalled by the social critic. What is wrong with such thoughts emerges in the answers

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writers offer to some obvious moral or political problems. When Richard Rorty suggests that there is less point in condemning the American conduct of the Vietnam War as unjust or inhumane or wicked than in condemning it as somehow discordant with the American political tradition, many of us would want to retort that if it had been perfectly in accord with that tradition it would still have been unjust, inhumane, and wicked.

More generally, it is one thing to try to make one's political and moral theory reflect the complexity of the social or political enterprises that it is intended to elucidate and criticize, quite another to suggest that all worthwhile criticism has to endorse a larger tradition in order to make sense. This was dubiously true of major revolutions of thought in the physical sciences, where the tradition itself was rewritten in the light of new information. It is dubiously true of critical theory in literature and the fine arts where the same process of rewriting occurs fairly uninhibitedly.

It is not clear to me at least that in order to make sense of Socrates, say, we have to go down the implausible route of turning him into a traditionalist *faute de mieux* or the equally implausible route of saying that he was an uninteresting or ineffective critic because he was not. It is certainly possible to quarrel with Socrates without adopting the philistine view of philosophy displayed in I.F. Stone's *Trial of Socrates*, and it is possible to complain that he was an unhelpful critic because he was so utterly at odds with his fellow Athenians' view of the world. But it is equally possible to argue that he was and has remained a critic for all seasons precisely because he climbed out of the cave and took a larger view than his fellows.

There are doubtless many other ways in which this methodological argument could be constructed; the opposition between the integrated and the alienated critic does not altogether catch the realities of debate. For instance, Kant is a paradigm of detached a priori speculation, but his political writings are very firmly rooted in the conditions of a half-enlightened late eighteenth-century Germany, and although Marx insisted that the human essence was the ensemble of social relations and that all abstract moralizing in the name of the abstract individual was a hopeless waste of time he still condemned history as a catalogue of follies and oppressions in the best Enlightenment fashion. Still, once the simple point is made that any criticism, any innovation, any change of view has to latch on to *something* in our existing worldview, and that that world view must be a social rather than strictly individual possession, we have exhausted the logical constraints of a holistic methodology. The rest is debatable and partly a matter of taste and fashion; sometimes we feel more at home with the critic from within, whose affection for what he is criticizing is evident; sometimes we need the energy that comes from estrangement and a real dislike of what the critic condemns. I doubt whether there is very much that is useful to be said about such preferences except on a case-by-case basis.

A Critique of Modernity

If methodological disputes are one field where there's a distinctive communitarian line, where we find all communitarians lined up in one camp, the second field, the "antimodernist" critique of contemporary politics and culture certainly can be distinctively communitarian, though much more contested within the communitarian ranks. The communitarian critique of modernity is a familiar topic; theorists of *Gemeinschaft* lamented the rise of *Gesellschaft:* Durkheim has frequently been misunderstood to say that formerly there was social solidarity but now there is a merely functional order assented to by self-interested individuals. Edmund Burke's eloquence was poured out on those who tried to strip the individual of his collective attachments and prejudices and send him naked into the world. Whether Alasdair MacIntyre can be unequivocally labeled a communitarian is debatable; that he is unequivocally an antimodernist is not. It is unnecessary to pile up examples. The commonest items in the repertoire of those who practice the politics of nostalgia are the belief in a warm communal past and a hostility to a present in which the callous cash nexus is the only bond between man and man. Of course, these views are far from being a monopoly of theorists. When Arthur Scargill led the British miners in their

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hopeless battle against Mrs. Thatcher and the modern British bobby in 1984 and 5, his only ideological weapon was the appeal to the traditional image of the mining village, the solidaristic community built around shared employment and shared hardships and danger.

Piling up examples of nostalgia is unhelpful, however, because the more vital consideration is the existence of innumerable counter-examples. Or, rather, we need to distinguish between antimodernism for its own sake, where the past is genuinely the object of attraction, and antimodernism for the sake of the future community. Marx obviously, and Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue,* are but two writers who have assailed the uncommunal present, not in the name of the past, but in the name of the once-and-future community. That is, we may draw our image of the community that expresses and reinforces our better, more fulfilled selves from previous societies or previously aspired-to societies, but we may combine this inevitably partial image with a sociological and moral understanding of the past's limits and the future's potentialities. Here, there is no doubt again that there is a distinctively communitarian slant to the argument; it is not antiliberal, but it is anti-contractual. Its liberalism, where it is liberal, depends on the thought that a liberal society embodying a liberal morality in its *conscience collective* is the indispensable base and support for the liberal individual—Durkheim's actual view. Its conservatism, as Roger Scruton's contributions to British conservatism, is distinctively communitarian in being hostile to the revival of laissez-faire thinking that often passes for conservatism; it is insistent on the need for cultural discipline and cultural support, on the need for a culturally acceptable conception of freedom, on a wide view of property as a means of anchoring us to society and not only a resource to be exploited economically. Here, too, ambiguities abound, of course, but once again, there is little that can be said about the scope of the communitarian's arguments a priori. One may challenge Durkheim by denying that we are quite so dependent on a given society's collective morality as he suggests, and one may challenge Scruton by denying that authority plays so benevolent a role as he implies, but we shall always be proceeding case by case.

How Important Is Justice?

The third way in which communitarianism is distinctive is in its relative downplaying of rights and justice as the foundation stones of any political theory. This may seem a perverse view, given Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* and Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?,* but a moment's reflection shows that it's not. *Spheres of Justice* is less about justice as it has usually been treated over the past twenty or thirty years than about apt allocative principles for a variety of human goods; to settle these principles we ask about the way in which the goods themselves matter to those who would enjoy them. Far from supposing that there is an abstract, more or less timeless notion of justice to which we may appeal in scrutinizing the fairness of such allocations, we are bidden to work up to a plurality of principles from a proper sense of the variety of goods and their varying importance to different societies and persons. Conversely, Michael Sandel's criticism of Rawls's *Theory of Justice* relies not only on the thought that Rawlsian selves are impossible to envisage but also on the thought that fraternity is a more important ingredient in social harmony than justice.

Having said this, we have to take at least some of it back. Once again, Durkheim turns out to hold strikingly individualistic and justice-oriented views—though with a twist that makes him the distinctive figure he is. In the modern world, but only in the modern world, individuals have a passion for justice; they wish not merely to do well but to do as well as they are entitled to. The world of a career open to talents is the world in which we can only be satisfied if our rewards reflect our abilities—a piece of wishful thinking if ever there were one, but no matter. The peculiar place of justice in modern society is so to speak bracketed by Durkheim; it is a reflection of the nature of modern society rather than a reflection of the nature of justice. Still, having taken this much back, we can at least see how justice is to be understood in a communitarian

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framework. Justice is not a framework established by individual contractors so much as the moral climate in which contracting becomes salient. Hence communitarians can adopt what might be called an arm's-length or historical understanding of the modern world, so that an emphasis on justice is not the occasion for jeremiads about the rise of self-interested behavior but an occasion to remind readers that the sanctity of contract reflects a social force, not individual convenience.

I am conscious that these remarks have swung between irritation and hesitation, that I have insisted that of course there is no simple opposition between liberalism and communitarianism, and have then gone on to suggest that there are few moral and political positions that cannot come in both communitarian and noncommunitarian flavors, so that there's next to nothing worth saying about communitarianism in general. I mustn't end here. There is a tradition, not fully articulate or strictly philosophical, but tangible enough, which is distinctive and attractive and which animates a great deal of British socialist and social democratic thinking, and which is quite plausibly described as "communitarian" in allegiance. If it has no claim to be *the* communitarian tradition, it nonetheless strikes me as much the most attractive of communitarian traditions. Its existence gives the lie to all those who think that communitarian ways of thinking must be conservative and retrogressive.

It is what we get from R.H. Tawney, A.D. Lindsay, and Richard Titmuss; it starts from a variety of sources, Burke's emphasis on the "little platoons," the Puritans' emphasis on the local congregation, early trade unionists' emphasis on solidarity among those who worked side by side. It is suspicious of rationalistic demands for universal justice and abstract egalitarianism but confident enough in the good nature of men and women who have been fortunate in their moral upbringing to talk readily of the brotherhood of man. It is more apt to appeal to decency and fair play than to search for justifiable rights or large principles. It has been less the creation of moral philosophers or political theorists than of practical people engaged in education or in pushing forward the welfare state or making industrial relations more equitable. It has been anti-utopian, because it has been unwilling to sacrifice the actual to the possible, and because it has supposed that we ought to build on the best we can make of the present rather than leveling the ground and starting from scratch. It has not been illiberal, because it has always been committed to the ethos of give and take, but it has not been happy with the liberal rhetoric of freedom because of its fear that freedom for the pike means death for the minnow and because of the history of selfish, greedy, and powerful individuals and states passing off their interests as "freedom." It has not been conservative, because it has thought the past more brutal, more constraining, and less fulfilling than the present is for many and the future could be for all. It is at present unfashionable in Britain; it is very largely unknown to what fashionably passes for communitarian thought in the United States. It is, for all that, the one piece of communitarian thinking that—partly because it comes without contentious philosophical trappings—manages to put forward an attractive political position that is distinctive in just the way a communitarian position should be. □

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Don Herzog

UP TOWARD LIBERALISM

An earnest but ignorant undergraduate once wandered into a used book sale. Having some interest in political theory, he picked up a copy of Harold Laski's *The Rise of Liberalism: The Philosophy of a Business Civilization* (1936). He didn't know that Laski was a maverick Marxist; in fact he didn't know enough to realize that the subtitle was a giveaway. The book cost a quarter. The undergraduate decided to skip that day's chocolate bar, plunked down his money, hiked over to the gorge, and started reading.

A new economic order, he learned, arose at the end of the Middle Ages, in the fifteenth century, and thrust the middle class into prominence. This class needed some new ideas to justify its rise, to assist it in radically restructuring society. So presto! "Liberalism came, then, as a new ideology to fit the needs of a new world." In Laski's hands, liberalism seemed to have a mind of its own, frequently outwitting the confused mortals who champi-oned it. The history of liberalism, he urged, wasn't "a conscious and persistent search" for representative self-government, universal suf-frage, free association, individual autonomy, and the like; rather, "these were the ends its more ultimate purposes caused it to serve."

So followed a galloping tour through the Puritans and Locke, Smith and Bentham, and countless other figures. Laski conceded that liberalism had introduced some worthy emanci-pations. At its core, though, was whatever noxious privilege would serve the bourgeoisie. In the end, liberal emancipation was nothing but the right of wealthy people to earn more money and squander more wealth, cheerfully oblivious to the plight of those around them. Laski finished his study on a bitter but urgently apocalyptic note. The world war, he urged, was the ultimate absurdity of self-deluded liberals. Fighting for their privileges and profits, mouthing the rhetoric of the common good and social order, they were "without the vision to perceive that the thing they called humanity was no other than the greed they served."

This was heady stuff for our undergraduate: He wasn't quite aware yet that such an argument might be controversial. After all, he'd already run into much the same sort of thing at college. Not that Marxists were in charge of the university. Then as now, that was a fantasy of journalists and politicians wholly out of touch with university life. But one didn't have to be any sort of Marxist to be an antiliberal. Liberalism was a theory about presocial individuals who magically popped into the world pursuing their self-interest; claiming to be about the rights of all, it really forwarded the rights of those with money and was blind to workers and the poor; it had exhausted whatever political vitality it had decades before. So the line went, in history classes, philosophy classes, sociology classes, and more.

The undergraduate was me, natch, and I headed off to graduate school to work in political theory. There I learned the finicky baroque variations that have been played on this antiliberal theme. But I also learned that despite their honorable pedigree, despite how frequently they've been repeated by extremely intelligent people, they might be just plain wrong. True, antiliberal polemics are still big business in political theory; some of them are surveyed elsewhere in this issue. Yet there has also been something of a renaissance of liberalism, brought on in part by impatience with the portrait offered by its critics.

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What follows is a brief sampling of some recent books prominent in this renaissance. The liberalism on the rise, in large part as a result of the work of these authors, isn't the ideological smokescreen for the bourgeoisie that concerned Laski. It's a far more subtle, incisive tradition, one surely worthy of attention and respect—indeed, as I'll urge below, one especially worthy of the respect of leftists.

Books Discussed in this Essay

Amy Gutmann, *Liberal Equality*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Stephen Holmes, *Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

Nancy Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Equality in the Liberal Tradition

The first half of Amy Gutmann's *Liberal Equality* is an exploration of the role played by equality in the liberal tradition. As Gutmann shows, liberals have always insisted on the equality of persons. No doubt there have been limits placed on that equality: It applies to men, not women, propertyholders, not the poor; it's only formal equality, not substantive equality, or only equality of opportunity, not equality of outcomes or starting points, and so on. But there have always been good liberal arguments against such limits. So Gutmann places the Fabian socialists squarely in the context of the liberal tradition and persuasively demonstrates the deep continuity between their work and that of their predecessors.

Gutmann must be right, I think, that it's easy for liberals to argue against certain limits to equality. Not that liberals want a social world in which we're all compelled to be alike: This is a common charge among conservatives, although I don't know of any liberals who have come close to it. But take for instance the suggestion that liberals should care only about equality of opportunity. The image often accompanying this position is that of a race: it's fair, the argument goes, for everyone to run the race with the same rules, but it's not fair to insist that everyone cross the finish line at the same time, or run at the same pace. No doubt: But the image itself tells against the easy separation of equality of opportunity from equality of starting points. For surely part of the fairness of a race lies in everyone beginning at the same starting line. To translate back to the market, if I begin my adult life penniless and George Bush begins with millions, we can both strive to make more money. And it's not impossible that I'll end up wealthier than Bush, any more than it's impossible to win a footrace when your opponent has a head start. Still, the odds are that he'll be wealthier. So it seems that any viable conception of equality of opportunity must include some version of equality of starting points.

Gutmann's own interest in the egalitarian tradition lies in extending its commitments to democratic participation in everyday life. In the second half of her book she turns to Rawls's theory of justice. Rawls is officially agnostic about the choice between capitalism and socialism: he wants principles of justice that could guide either sort of economic order. Gutmann argues that the typically liberal strands of Rawls's view in fact impel it toward democratic socialism. One of Rawls's primary goods is the social bases of self-respect. If you spend eight hours a day on the job, taking orders from a manager or foreman, acting as what Aristotle and Marx alike would call an animate instrument of production, then what will become of your self-respect? Workers have various strategies for salvaging their self-respect in the face of various forms of oppression. Those strategies shouldn't be dismissed out of hand, but they also shouldn't be romantically celebrated. Yielding control of the workplace to the workers would serve as a public acknowledgment of their dignity. This suggestion isn't novel, of course, but Gutmann places it emphatically at the heart of the liberal tradition.

Gutmann's argument here tells against another antiliberal refrain, one repeated numbingly for centuries but best represented these days in the work of Benjamin Barber. The

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refrain: Democracy and liberalism are, in the last analysis, opposed. Democracy is a matter of popular sovereignty; liberalism is a laundry list of limits on the rights of democratic majorities. So a radical democrat should reject liberal limits. But as Gutmann has argued elsewhere (notably in "How Liberal Is Democracy?" in *Liberalism Reconsidered*), democracy is better thought of as government by discussion, and many liberal "limits" serve the end of democracy by ensuring that discussion and assembly remain open and vibrant. I don't know why Gutmann chose in her *Democratic Education* (Princeton University Press, 1987) to identify herself as a democrat, not a liberal. Her own earlier arguments undercut this stale juxtaposition.

History of Liberalism

Stephen Holmes's *Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism* is an extremely rich account of liberalism, perhaps unfortunately packaged as a narrow scholarly monograph. In Holmes's hands, Constant's reactions to the political predicaments of postrevolutionary France become a springboard for offering a vibrant new account of liberalism, treading what looked like drearily familiar ground and generating new insights. Indeed it's not always clear where Constant stops and Holmes begins.

Historians might raise quizzical eyebrows at the thought that we have much to learn about our political dilemmas from an exploration of the days of Napoleon, the Bourbons, and the like. And Holmes is no anachronistic pursuer of the timeless wisdom of political theory. Still, he'd say, antiliberalism has been around at least as long as liberalism, and hasn't changed all that much. (That might mean antiliberals are on to some deep truths. It also might mean they're repetitive and boring.)

So, for instance, Holmes explores Constant's ambivalent response to Rousseau. Constant himself, it turns out, was tremendously sympathetic to romantic critiques of modern society as phony, cold, impersonal, insincere, a world where men disappear, leaving nothing but masks behind. He well understood why one might hanker after the ancients, and think that something very valuable had been lost. Still, he thought, it must be a deep error to try to reclaim the world of ancient politics. So he moved to debunk it, suggesting for instance that the ancients' famed obsession with political participation was nothing but a solution to boredom, a boredom induced by the lack of other things to do.

But why would it be a deep error to try to reclaim the ancients? Focusing on Constant's celebrated lecture on the liberty of ancients and moderns, Holmes rebuts the everyday charge that liberalism is presociological or prehistorical, that liberal theorists move in a ghostly intellectual world where individual rights are perennially available. Quite the contrary, he argues: The very possibility of liberalism hangs on large-scale social change, in particular the progress of social differentiation, the emergence of increasingly separate social institutions and roles. So we shouldn't ask, with Robert Nozick, what features of the self give rise to rights; instead we should ask what features of the social structure make them possible.

The root idea is this: The very idea of having a right against the state requires that there be some extrapolitical social space in which to stand. The Greeks simply didn't have that: In their lives as in their theories, the polis pervaded virtually all spheres of life. But modern society has many extrapolitical settings: the market, the church, science, and so on. Rights here serve as barriers against state interference, marking and safeguarding the boundaries between different institutions. Attempting in the name of the ancients to repoliticize everyday life would in this new context be a disaster. It could lead only to the overheated climate of Robespierre's France, where the noble term *citoyen* was perverted by a self-appointed secret police composed of informers. And it was in this context that insincerity could be a signal virtue: Lying to one's neighbors could maintain one's autonomy, while sincerity could mean being turned in by a stranger.

Romanticism and Liberalism

Nancy Rosenblum's *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal*

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Thought is meditative, nuanced, deft on matters of moral psychology, and in my view those qualities more than compensate for its lack of philosophical rigor. Rosenblum's is another liberalism, in part because political theorists are now quite clear (or should be) that liberalism is a tradition, a family of disagreements, and not a single view. She constructs an exchange between liberalism and romanticism, to see what each has to learn from the other. Modern individuals, in her view, are susceptible to a characteristically romantic set of longings, for wholeness, spontaneity, self-expression, warmth, and the like. Liberalism, with its traditional emphasis on the formal impersonality of public life, must strike such individuals as barren. What can liberals say to them?

Quite a lot, it turns out. Rosenblum develops three different strategies for meeting romantic complaints. Though she sometimes describes these as transforming liberalism, they're better described, I think, as supplementing liberalism. For no typically liberal doctrine is altered in her hands. Instead—and it's a noteworthy achievement—she brings to bear new justificatory resources, new arguments and considerations that liberals can draw on to assuage romantic longings, to "bring them home" to the very liberalism they initially found repulsive.

First comes heroic individualism. The romantic wants bold displays of self; liberalism usually promises civil peace and private happiness. But Thoreau, Rosenblum urges, shows us how to make room for heroic displays in liberal society. (I'd pick a quarrel with her reading of Thoreau: I think he mocks both liberalism and heroism even as he endorses them. But her argument doesn't depend so strictly on her exegesis.) In private society, individuals can be as dismissive of traditional norms as they choose; they can put themselves on display in the service of idiosyncratic visions; their independence of mind coheres nicely with traditional liberal sentiments. Even in public life there's room for the hero: Instead of merely voting, heroic citizens put their whole selves on display, challenging their opponents more forcibly and rallying others to their cause. As romantic individuals, though, they're hardly likely to become fascist leaders with surging mobs behind them. Their studied desire to be nonconformists should assure liberals that they're safe.

Next come shifting involvements. The romantic wants expansive self-development and hates the thought of being stuck in some rut. But then the very schism that threatens wholeness, the public/private distinction, indeed the social differentiation that honeycombs modern society, can serve romantic ends. The romantic can dance from one social setting to another: Tired of absorption in commerce, she can head to the family; tired of the family, she can go to a public rally; and so on. Each social setting will draw on and develop a different facet of her rich personality. So individuality itself depends on the availability of a wealth of different social experiences; if we all occupied the same roles, we'd be far more similar than we are now. Such arguments have been made by John Stuart Mill and Georg Simmel: Rosenblum's contribution is to realize how well they serve romantic ends. Still, her argument is more antiromantic than she lets on. For what she's discovered is that romantic longings for wholeness and sincerity are diametrically opposed to romantic longings for endless variety.

Finally comes communitarianism. It's too crude, Rosenblum argues, to think that liberals must exclude the genuine regard for communal life that their opponents often tap. Liberal society isn't, in fact, composed of solitary individuals. It's full of expressive associations, and provided individuals aren't stuck in them against their will, liberals have no reason to complain about them. Rosenblum explores further communitarian possibilities, but I think she means to reject them decisively. Liberals rightly eschew some of the demands current communitarians are making; and, she argues, any romantic worth his salt would eschew them also, would see in them just those romantic excesses that ought to be chastened. It's a shrewd argument, maybe too shrewd: No self-respecting romantic would be deterred by the thought that her actions were destructively excessive. Still, if liberalism can salvage

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everything that's sane and defensible about romanticism, that's more than good enough.

These three books are only a sample of a broader literature, and I've had to compress them greatly here. Again, though, they should suggest a vision of liberalism far removed from Laski's, far removed from the wooden and one-dimensional account fastened on by antiliberals. Some will think this version of liberalism is too far removed from Laski's, that whatever the demerits of his lumbering Marxism Laski was right in spying out an unholy alliance between liberalism and capitalism. And it's characteristic of recent liberals to downplay or even deny any such alliance. I want then to close by trying to dispel the suspicion that Laski was right about that much.

Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* I've learned ruefully, is one of those books everyone knows the contents of, even though few have actually read it. Here are just some of the things Smith actually says about capitalism. The labor market is coercive, since masters "can hold out much longer" in protracted disputes thanks to their savings. Fellow tradesmen "seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the publick, or in some contrivance to raise prices." The rich are incurably vain, striving "to possess those decisive marks of opulence which nobody can possess but themselves." The government, "so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all." And the division of labor is radically dehumanizing. "The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations . . . generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become." He finally becomes "incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation [or] of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life."

Perhaps I should add that in his *Principles of Political Economy* and the later "Chapter on Socialism" John Stuart Mill picked up many of these same themes, urging that his contemporaries were slavishly addicted to the rights of private property, and giving such utopian socialists as Charles Fourier extremely respectful consideration. In fact Mill himself urged that democratic control of the workplace would and should be extended to the workers. If Smith and Mill said these things, perhaps we should reevaluate our conception of the tie between liberalism and capitalism. Liberals championed capitalism when it seemed to them to further the interests of ordinary men and women: Indeed, capitalism might be thought superior to bastard feudal relations or onerous apprenticeships. Liberals turned against capitalism when it seemed to them to be shackling ordinary men and women. Liberalism, they thought, gave them plenty of resources for criticizing the structure of the modern workplace. They were right: And in a country as emphatically liberal as ours, it's hardly judicious for leftists to disavow those resources.

That there might be liberal arguments against capitalism will strike readers brought up on the likes of Laski as fanciful at best, wholly misinformed at worst. But (I tell you three times) it's true anyway. Granted, libertarians continue to press the merits of laissez-faire capitalism. Ayn Rand even described big business as America's most persecuted minority. And I would place libertarianism within the bounds of the liberal tradition. Again, though, it's a capacious tradition. Celebrants of free speech and vigorous disagreement, often controversialists themselves, liberals argue with one another about the best rendition of liberal principles. There's no reason to believe that libertarians or American "conservatives" would fare particularly well in an argument with leftist liberals (assuming the latter aren't quite extinct yet). I don't tend to believe that academic books make all that much of a political difference. Still, the revival of liberalism in the academy could provide political ammunition for those seeking to state anew the case for democratic socialism. □

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Sanford Levinson

ON CRITICAL LEGAL STUDIES

The Conference on Critical Legal Studies (CLS) came into being in Madison, Wisconsin in 1977, during a meeting of legal scholars and practitioners dissatisfied with "mainstream" law. Since then "crits" have become one of the most important—and controversial—groups within the legal academy. The editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal* regularly denounces them as exemplars of the left-wing mentality allegedly pervading leading law schools. From a more scholarly vantage point, Paul Carrington, formerly dean of Duke University Law School, suggested in a 1984 article that there was something questionable about their teaching in law school, though he had no objection to their teaching elsewhere in the university, in departments of political science or sociology. Law professors should "believe" in law, he argued, whereas most adherents of CLS are distinctly agnostic, if not atheistic, in this regard.[1]

Moreover, intense controversy surrounded Harvard's denial of tenure to two CLS-identified professors, Clare Dalton and David Trubek. Dalton, already an assistant professor, was supported by a majority of her colleagues, but did not receive the two-thirds approval required by the law school; Trubek, visiting Harvard from Wisconsin, did receive such a vote, but was then rejected for tenure by President Derek Bok, an ex-dean of the law school. Many legal academics (including myself) signed a letter suggesting that these rejections were politically motivated, sending a message to legal academics that association with CLS would be decidedly dangerous to one's professional health. What is this fuss about? Should those outside the legal academy care about it?

What follows is too short to provide a full-scale introduction to what is now a significant body of literature, much of it devoted to debates within CLS about what constitutes a critical perspective.[2] My partial view focuses on what I find most challenging, intellectually and politically, in the positions associated with CLS.

To some extent CLS must be understood as the latest manifestation of America's most distinctive contribution to legal philosophy, "legal realism," which in turn was part of what Morton White termed "the revolt against formalism." That revolt was spearheaded by philosophers such as William James, Charles Pierce, and John Dewey. Central to American law, though, was Oliver Wendell Holmes, the key figure behind the entire "realist" movement.

In *The Common Law* Holmes argued what has since become a commonplace, that the life of the law is "experience" and not "logic." Realists attacked the intellectual pretensions of those who claimed to "deduce" legal conclusions from master first premises through some kind of quasi-"scientific" process called "thinking like a lawyer." Just as important, though, was their attack on the purported political neutrality of legal thinking by which "law" (and legal thinking) was sharply differentiated from "politics" (and political judgment). According to Holmes, the "felt necessities of the time" explained the development of the law, and these necessities most certainly included the desires of politically dominant groups, whose power included the ability to place on the judiciary men (which in this case does *not* mean "men and women") generally sympathetic to their worldview and standing at

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the top of the hierarchical structure. Although few realists were particularly influenced by Marx, there was a shared view that law was basically superstructural, resting on a deeper social or economic base.

Among other things, Realism dethrones law as the basis of social order and the provider of social justice. Such order as exists is the result either of political compromise among socially significant groups or successful domination of one group by another. Legal structures may make marginal contributions to the maintenance of order, but one should not overestimate the extent of this contribution. As to justice, any relationship between law and an admirable polity is entirely contingent. This contingency is captured philosophically in Holmes's insistence on the analytical separation of law and morality: It was no part of the definition of law that it be just. Iniquitous societies have recognizable legal systems. Law and justice may sometimes overlap or even coincide, but history is full of examples, including that of American slavery, where they patently did not. At its root, law is congealed social power; such justice as exists is wholly dependent on the justice of those with power. One should not seriously expect law to tame the powerful.

These were not the only insights of Realism. Another major thread of the Realist critique, found in the writings of Morris R. Cohen and Robert Hale, among others, involved the claim of traditional jurisprudence that a regime of "private" rights was prior to, and protected by, the legal order. This "public-private" distinction was subjected to withering analysis, as these writers argued that the very notion of private property, for example, was the product of existing legal arrangements. The "private," that is, was inevitably defined by the "public" world of law, and it made no sense to see them as separate realms.

Perhaps the best-known aspect of the Realist argument concerned the strength of legal doctrine as a genuine constraint on decision making. Jerome Frank is probably the most notorious of the later Realists, especially because of *Law and the Modern Mind,* in which he argued that the belief in the possibility of legal certainty was symptomatic of infantile longings for an omniscient father. We should, said Frank, grow up (as did his hero Holmes) and accept that certainty is a delusion. Frank's colleague in Realism, Thurman Arnold, wrote similarly savage attacks from a more anthropological perspective; like Thorstein Veblen, Arnold delighted in ridiculing the rituals and pretensions of the law. Law-talk was equivalent, in all important respects, to the mumbo-jumbo of witch doctors and had as little to do with grasping the shape of the social world.

An important anomaly emerges, though, if one studies the careers of Frank and Arnold, or, indeed, many of the other important Realists of the twenties and thirties. One might think that persons engaged in such a radical attack on traditional legal theory would withdraw from the world of law altogether, or at least become "outside" analysts, such as legal sociologists or anthropologists, rather than remain "inside" the legal profession. Yet both Frank and Arnold engaged in important service in the New Deal administration of President Roosevelt, and both accepted appointment to the federal judiciary, as did William O. Douglas, another Realist. Both Frank and Douglas spent decades on the bench. (Arnold, bored by the work of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, resigned to join what later became the important Washington law firm Arnold, Fortas, and Porter.) As we shall see, this career pattern differs from that of contemporary "crits."

Edward Purcell notes in his important book *The Crisis in Democratic Theory* that the coming of World War II substantially brought the Realist critique of law to a halt. The notion of the "rule of law" (as against the "rule of men") was transformed from an illusion to be attacked into a crucial sign of the difference between American society and its fascist (or communist) antagonists.

Moreover, it is significant that most of the Realists were liberal or progressive, rather than radical, in their politics. Much of their animus to conventional jurisprudence was generated by opposition to the Supreme Court's reading of the Constitution as barring various efforts at reform. The most salient example was the 1905 *Lochner* decision, in which the majority of the Court invalidated a New York law limiting the

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work week of bakers to sixty hours. Holmes wrote one of the most important dissents in American history denouncing this setting aside of legislative will. The post–Roosevelt era, on the other hand, featured a jurisprudence that at once counseled deference to legislative decisions in regard to economic regulation and justified aggressive protection of so-called "preferred freedoms" linked to the First Amendment.

Law and the Progressive Vision

In 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* seemed to demonstrate further that law could be linked to a progressive social vision and become an instrument for achieving a just society. The onslaught of criticism directed at the court by southern whites following *Brown* made it seem especially tasteless to recall the Realist attacks on jurisprudential pretense. Instead, liberal legal academics devoted much of their energy to criticizing those who viewed *Brown* as a decision by judges willing to use their power in behalf of a specific political agenda. Rejecting Realism, these latter-day liberals presented the court as engaging only in impersonal enforcement of the law.

The various attempts to submerge Realism did not survive the social and political cleavages of the 1960s, at least for those who later founded CLS. One of the arguments most common among the "crits" is that this notion of "impersonality" is untenable. Judges do not submit themselves to the "commands" of the law.[3] Although many of the people most interested in the so-called "indeterminacy of interpretation," including myself, draw their evidence from contemporary literary theory and hermeneutics, there is a clear linkage between this wing of critical legal studies and the earlier attack of the Realists. Both involve relentless attacks on any notion of "certainty" in the law and emphasize instead the "open-textured" nature of legal language. Many of us would argue that it is the reader-interpreter who creates the meaning of a legal text rather than the text that independently forces any given meaning upon the interpreter.

Ironically, though, most contemporary proponents of the indeterminacy thesis do not share the Realists' view that judges were consciously "choosing" interpretations in line with their political views. One difference between contemporary critics and Realists is that the former take ideology extremely seriously and try to show how it is that judges feel *compelled* to reach certain decisions because they are caught within the web of a given legal consciousness that makes certain results appear "obvious." It is pointless (and misleading) to accuse *Lochner*-era judges of consciously inserting a property-protective theory into a Constitution that they "knew" did not contain such a theory.

Contemporary "crits" would, I think properly, disdain such a description when applied to conservative judges, just as they would reject the New Right description of Justice Brennan as consciously disregarding what he knows to be the "genuine" commands of the Constitution in favor of his own political agenda. In both cases, "crit" theorists would argue that although (1) there is *no* unique set of "genuine" commands, i.e., the Constitution can be made to mean practically anything; nonetheless, (2) any given judge will construct a theory of the law that leads to his or her feeling that a particular decision is indeed compelled.

A major source of controversy involves the first claim, which some opponents of CLS, including political liberals like Yale professor Owen Fiss, view as leading to a basically "nihilist" notion of law. And, indeed, the ghost of Nietzsche haunts a lot of the contemporary debate, as many "crits" emphasize the "genealogy" of law and describe a sometimes raw struggle to establish dominance over the relevant organs of interpretation, including the courts, while their opponents emphasize the presence of canons of interpretation that genuinely discipline and constrain legal interpreters. Several members of CLS self-consciously identify with "deconstructionist" approaches to literature, so it should be no surprise that the debate within the legal academy often replicates the sometimes savage fights seen in university departments of English or comparative literature.

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What is perhaps most surprising about the analyses of law presented by some leading "crits" is the explicit rejection of the earlier functionalist arguments that typified Realist approaches. That is, many earlier Realists emphasized the linkage between legal outcomes and the interests of the rich and powerful within society. Much energy was expended trying to demonstrate that one or another legal development could best be explained because it reflected the interests or demands of, say, capitalists, bankers, or merchants. By no means do all CLS writers reject this view: Morton Horwitz, one of the founding members of CLS, won the Bancroft Prize in 1977 for *The Transformation of American Law*, which argued that American legal developments in the early nineteenth century can best be explained in terms of the needs of a dynamic capitalism.

However, a competing tendency in CLS today is well described by Mark Kelman in *A Guide to Critical Legal Studies*, where he focuses on the CLS critique of functionalism—"the claim that one could both understand what social needs exist and predict certain necessary legal responses to them." To some extent, "crits" adopt traditional critiques of functionalism, focusing on "(1) indeterminacy of legal response, (2) social conflict over the appropriate legal agenda, and (3) legal system autonomy." As to the first, most CLS adherents do not believe that "the law" is sufficiently determinate in its application to genuine social controversies as to provide the basis for any statements of the type "the law of contract is functional to X." Moreover, even if the law had a more determinate content than suggested, it would still be impossible, according to Kelman, "to match up prevailing" law "with particular social conditions." One just cannot tell what is "functional." Some capitalists need rule stability just as others, more at the cutting edge of new developments, need courts willing to overrule now stifling precedents. As many critics of Marxist functionalism have pointed out, capitalists themselves are often highly divided in their particular interests, so that *any* decision can be shown to be "functional" for some and "dysfunctional" for others. In any event, as Robert Gordon writes, "For the Crits, law is inherently neither a ruling-class game plan nor a repository of noble if perverted principles [as liberals might argue]."

Why Dissect the Law?

If law fits neither of these "traditional" descriptions, then what *does* law do to make it worthy of the intense study that CLS members in fact give it? Gordon answers that law (or perhaps what we might term "law-talk") serves as "a plastic medium of discourse that subtly conditions how we experience social life." One no longer refers to law as superstructural, which entails a claim that one can grasp the "true" underlying structure. Instead one emphasizes the extent to which the very picture we have of "society" is imbued with legal referents. Thus, we cannot refer to the conflict between capital and labor, feudal lords and serfs, or husbands and wives, without recognizing that all of these terms are embedded within legal understandings. Law-talk is "among the discourses that help us to make sense of the world," according to Gordon, "that fabricate what we interpret as its reality. They construct roles for us like 'Owner' and 'Employee,' and tell us how to behave in the roles. (The person cast as 'Employee' is subordinate. Why? It just is that way, part of the role.)" Legal categories "filter our experience."

Gordon goes on to offer three basic points as typical of CLS analysis: (1) "Legal discourses . . . tend to reflect the interests and the perspectives of the powerful people who make most use of them." (2) These discourses, whether proferred by the powerful or the powerless, "are saturated with categories and images that for the most part rationalize and justify in myriad subtle ways the existing social order as natural, necessary, and just." (3) Finally, "legal discourses have the legitimating power they do because they sketch pictures of widely shared, wishful, inchoate visions of an ideal." That is, existing legal structures are justified often by reference to ideals like undominated equality. The aim of the CLS analyst is to show that nothing in our polity is "inevitable" or "natural." Any particular

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aspect could be radically different from what it is. This part of the project is clearly linked to European "critical theory." And the "revisionary" discourse favored by CLS adherents can at least some of the time build on ideals located within traditional legal discourse, even if their more radical implications are repressed in ordinary legal consciousness.

Most CLS members are on "the left" in terms of political sympathies. It should be obvious, though, that their analyses differ from traditional Marxist approaches, which are both functional and determinist. Gordon is fairly typical in rejecting both these views and emphasizing instead that liberation lies in recognizing the extent to which legal understandings are radically contingent and thus open to fundamental change. Indeed, I have been tempted on occasion to view some CLS writers as the latest development of American transcendentalism, responding to its invitation to cast off the excrescences of traditional thought. (Indeed, some leftists criticize CLS for having rejected materialism and embracing "idealism" in its stead.)

Most CLS adherents stand firmly in the camp of those who reject "foundational" political or social theory. Thus, with few exceptions, they tend to be critical of John Rawls, who is viewed as trying to provide just such a foundation for political judgment through the use of abstract reason alone. Like other contemporary social theorists, including Jacques Derrida, Clifford Geertz, Richard Rorty, or Michael Walzer, most CLS writers reject any privileged perception of "reality." Like these writers as well, CLS "crits" have been accused by their detractors of being relativists whose own often eloquent appeals for justice are at bottom arbitrary.

CLS writers generally are stronger on criticism than on the presentation of preferred alternatives. Some writers, such as Mark Tushnet of Georgetown, have referred to this as the "blueprint" problem and have, like most Marxists, refused to offer such blueprints on the grounds that one can't really know how a radically transformed society would operate.

Very few of the CLS academics engage in any traditional lawyering tasks, whether reform-oriented litigation, preparation of legislative statutes, or the like. This constitutes a major difference from the behavior of the Realists mentioned earlier. It is not that "crits" are apolitical. Indeed, many, most notably Duncan Kennedy of Harvard, have specifically emphasized the importance of "local" politics, for example, that of the law school itself or of the law firm, and much of the interest in the Harvard Law School has been generated precisely by what is perceived to be the intense political struggle taking place between CLS and its opponents over the future shape of the institution. Still, this emphasis on "local" politics represents a withdrawal from more traditional political stages, and it means, among other things, that most of the leading CLS writers have little or no experience playing lawyer's roles. Hence, their students are rarely provided with visible role models for political activity.[4] The most notable exception, ironically, is perhaps the most relentlessly theoretical writer within CLS, Roberto Unger, who took a leave from the Harvard Law School to return to his native Brazil and work in a governmental agency.[5] But he has few American analogues.

Some minority and feminist professors, who regard CLS as basically white male in orientation, have criticized this relative disengagement and offered their own models of political action—ranging from rather traditional reform litigation to Catharine MacKinnon's nationwide efforts to pass extremely controversial local ordinances regulating sexually explicit, even if not legally "obscene," material that she believes to be harmful to women.[6]

One must take note as well of the Republican domination of the presidency over the past twenty years. It is hard to imagine the careers of Frank, Arnold, and Douglas without Roosevelt's capture of the presidency. The founding generation of CLS, now in their late forties, have had little opportunity to engage in traditional public service or, certainly, to serve on the federal bench. And few have exhibited great interest in traditional local politics. We will never know if a Dukakis administration would have dared to offer appointments to CLS analogues of brilliant conservatives like Richard Posner, Frank Easterbrook, and Antonin Scalia, who were plucked

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by the Reagan administration from the University of Chicago Law School to serve as federal appellate judges.

Notwithstanding these relatively mild criticisms, CLS has been an extraordinarily valuable contributor to the legal academy, raising fundamental questions and calling into necessary doubt some of the more complacent pictures of the law. I would, unlike many of my colleagues, be delighted if CLS became the dominant voice within American legal education. It is a voice that deserves to be well represented in any contemporary discussion about the meaning and impact of law. □

Notes

[1] I offer a full analysis of Carrington's argument in chapter five of my book *Constitutional Faith* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1988). I should also point out that I am a dues-paying member of CLS, though I would rightly be regarded more as a somewhat critical sympathizer than a core member.

[2] There are several such introductions. One of the best, "Law and Ideology," by Stanford law professor Robert Gordon, appeared in the January/February 1988 *Tikkun*. Much more extensive, but less accessible without prior knowledge of the debates, is *A Guide to Critical Legal Studies* (Harvard, 1987), by Mark Kelman, also at Stanford. Finally, mention should be made of *Essays on Critical Legal Studies*, made up of articles originally published in the *Harvard Law Review*.

[3] See my own piece in the summer 1988 issue of *Dissent*, "Clashes of Taste in Constitutional Interpretation," pp. 301–312.

[4] Guyora Binder presents an important discussion of this aspect of CLS in "Beyond Criticism," 55 *University of Chicago Law Review* 888 (1988); and "On Critical Legal Studies as Guerrilla Warfare," 76 *Georgetown Law Journal* 1 (1987).

[5] See Roberto Unger, "The Critical Legal Studies Movement," reprinted in *Essays on Critical Legal Studies*, pp. 318–432.

[6] Many would view MacKinnon as a CLS adherent, so I am perhaps setting up a false opposition in this paragraph. Nonetheless, no one familiar with the history of CLS can ignore the tensions that exist between the views of many of the male founders of CLS and those held by feminists sympathetic to its initial aims.

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Seyla Benhabib

ON CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST THEORY

The 1980s have been named "the decade of the humanities."[1] In institutions of higher learning all across the country a debate is underway as to what constitutes the "tradition," the "canon" of literary, artistic, and philosophical works worth transmitting to future generations. At the center of this debate is the following question: If what have hitherto been considered the major works of the Western tradition are, almost uniformly, the product of a specific group of individuals—propertied, white, European, and North-American males—how universal and representative is their message, how inclusive is their scope, and how unbiased their vision? In continuing to insist that their work alone constitutes the canon, are we not participating in the silencing, marginalization, and oppression of those "others," mainly women, non-white peoples, and members of non-Graeco-Roman and non-Christian traditions?

For those who were educated in the American academy in the late sixties and the early seventies and who are now in the position of transmitting this legacy to future generations, the ferment of the last decade has meant nothing less than an epistemological revolution of sorts. The pieces of a picture that previously fit together all of a sudden stop being coherent; one begins to see ragged edges, butting corners, obtrusive margins. In order to be able to fit the pieces back together, one now has to develop a new vision of the whole.

Feminist theory has been at the forefront of this paradigm shift, and under the impact of feminist scholarship the surface of the canon has been forever fractured, its legitimacy challenged. Once the woman question is raised, once we ask how a thinker conceptualizes the distinction between male and female and what capacities and activities he attributes to the female of the species, we begin to see Aristotle, Machiavelli, Rousseau, to name but a few, with new eyes—and in the words of Joan Kelly Gadol "each eye sees a different picture."[2] The vision of feminist theory is "doubled": We see what the tradition has trained us to see, and we search at the same time for what the tradition has told us was not even worth looking at.

Practicing this "doubled vision" of feminist theory, women scholars of political thought have not only documented the "misogynist" origins of the Western tradition and its continuing gender bias well into the Enlightenment and the modern period. They have gone further and identified the "gender subtext" in visions of the political subject, in the definition of the political realm, and in the logic of terms like "participation," "autonomy," "consent," and "rights."*

Women and the Polity: Ignoring the Evidence

In an article entitled "The Unit of Political Analysis: Our Aristotelian Hangover," Judith Hicks Stiehm points out that even though empirical analysis demonstrates that women and men participate differently in politics,

* See Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought;* Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman,* and Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason.*

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independent investigations of women's patterns of participation are not carried out. Suffering from a "collective Aristotelian hangover," empirical scientists often think of the "polity in terms of families" and simply subsume women's attitudes and activities under those of the male head of household.[3]

Janet Siltanen and Michelle Stenworth provide a telling account of how the view of the male as the "norm" of politics dominates political sociology:

> [L]inked to the male-as-norm principle is the tendency to demarcate in a sex-linked but otherwise arbitrary way the "political" from the "social" or the "moral." So, for example, when Greenstein finds that girls score higher than boys on measures of citizen duty and political efficacy he does not revise his assertions about apolitical females, but instead relabels these attitudes as "moral" rather than "political." In a similar manoeuvre, Dowse and Hughes dismiss the similarities in the attitudes of women and men towards capital punishment and birth control as a "moral" rather than a "political" overlap, while Lane differentiates man's approach to voting from women's "moral route to the polls." . . . The tendency to regard the concern of women workers with working conditions or the length of the working day as "social," while men's focusing on the wage packet is readily accepted as evidence of political awareness and class consciousness, follows the same mysterious logic.[4]

In this respect contemporary political theory does not fare differently from mainstream empirical research. In the works of such political theorists as John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer, and Roberto Unger, women and areas of concern to them—the family, the sexual division of labor in the family, reproductive rights, child rearing, and socialization—are either ignored, romantically trivialized, or linguistically whitewashed. Although for Rawls the family is a basic social institution, it is never explicitly discussed and principles of justice are not applied to it. The individuals behind the "veil of ignorance," although clearly intended to be of both genders, sound suspiciously more like male than female persons. Women's traditional and continuing immersion in a web of dependencies with other humans, and especially with children, makes it difficult if not outright unimaginable for them to abstract themselves from these bonds and to stand behind the "veil of ignorance" even in a counterfactual thought-experiment.[5]

Consider Alasdair MacIntyre's call in *After Virtue* to revive communities where friendship and civility are alive. The "orthodox Irish, Italian and Jewish" communities, which for MacIntyre are exemplars of these humane attitudes, are hardly known for their progressive and liberating views of women. Does the revival of communities of friendship and civility require a return to patriarchy or a defense of strong traditional and inegalitarian families? The fact that this issue is never addressed by MacIntyre implies that he considers it a nonissue. But then again is it not our turn to ask as women, "Whose Justice? Which Rationality?" (the title of the sequel to *After Virtue*).

Romanticized versions of gender relations are provided by Michael Walzer and Roberto Unger, for whom romantic love and courting arrangements appear more central than the distribution of labor and resources within the family. Perhaps the most charming example of linguistic liberalism, which completely ignores the reality of gender asymmetries in the real world, is given by Bruce Ackerman. In *Social Justice in the Liberal State*, the "Commander" charged with distributing the social resource of power and patrolling the political conversation is a woman. This egalitarian gesture prevents us from thinking seriously about existing gender asymmetries in actual society, and indeed nowhere in this book is gender itself discussed as a source of inequality, leading to differential access to power and other resources.

How to Explain Gender

Contemporary political thought ignores, trivializes, or glosses over women as political subjects because it makes no room for gender as an analytical category. "Gender" is to feminist theory what "class" and "production" were to traditional Marxism and what "the

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unconscious" and "repression" are to psychoanalysis. Gender defines a problem horizon that sensitizes us to a certain kind of difference. To adopt "gender" as an analytical category means to focus on the social and cultural construction of sexual difference among humans. Every culture, society, and historical epoch constitutes and interprets sexual difference in a certain way, and very often in more ways than one, which may themselves be contradictory. The social construction of sexual difference serves in turn as a constitutive element of all social and political relationships. As Joan Scott points out,

> [T]his does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and natural characteristics between women and men; rather gender is the knowledge that establishes meaning for bodily differences. . . . Sexual difference is not, then, the originary cause from which social organization ultimately can be derived. It is instead a variable social organization that itself must be explained.[6]

Although gender is the *differentia specifica* between feminist and "male"stream theory, it is around the very choice of an explanatory framework for gender that feminists today part company. Very broadly speaking, I see two rifts: on the one hand between "women's studies" scholars and feminist theorists and, on the other hand, among feminist theorists, between essentialists like Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich, postmodernists like Julia Kristeva, Gayatri Spivak, Toril Moi, and Jane Flax, and psychoanalytic feminists like Dorothy Dinnerstein, Nancy Chodorow, Evelyn Fox Keller, Jessica Benjamin, and Isaac Balbus. For the essentialists there is a set of transhistorically shared values, experiences, and attitudes that characterize the female of the species. Postmodernists, in the words of Jane Flax, consider gender relations "complex and unstable processes (or temporary 'totalities' in the language of dialectics) constituted by and through interrelated parts." For psychoanalytically oriented feminists, gender identities build the hard core of human selfhood, and such identities can be explained only in light of the institutions of female mothering or mother-monopolized child rearing in the modern world. Contemporary feminist theory is experiencing a *Methodenstreit,* a methodological warfare, itself an aspect of the general upheaval in the humanities today.

Women's studies scholars—and by this term I refer less to departmental affiliation than to methodological orientation—see the task of feminist scholarship to be the lifting of women's experience and culture out of marginality and their relocation at the center rather than at the peripheries of a discipline. This is the strategy of making "women visible" and their voices audible, expanding the canon in the humanities so as to place the invisible female in the public eye. On this view, the omission of the woman question is a matter of political and moral, but essentially corrigible, neglect within the established disciplines.

I would not want to disparage the contributions of these women's studies scholars to the radical reorientation and reevaluation of our views of women and their activities. Yet they do not go far enough. As feminist theorists argue, the "invisibility" of women, of their work, of their culture, may point to a more serious blind spot in the vision of traditional theory. Perhaps accepted paradigms of research in the human and social sciences, and in particular the dominant empiricist, positivist, and functionalist paradigms simply cannot accommodate the woman question.

Feminist theorists, whether essentialist, postmodernist, or psychoanalytic, agree that the omission of women is evidence of a more problematic view of knowledge within the tradition. Precisely the Platonic and Cartesian models of the knower as a mind's eye detached from the body, privileging disengagement from the world, preclude any recognition of corporality and sexuality as problems. The woman question is not just a political and moral problem but a problem of knowledge as well, challenging our very understanding of objectivity, of neutrality, of disinterestedness and disengagement. "Engendering" the political subject has consequences for the epistemological subject as well.

Engendering the Political Subject

In challenging the Platonic and Cartesian views, feminist theory has allied itself with

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various critics of the tradition like Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. These critics have emphasized the historicity and the situatedness of the subject and therefore the perspectival and interest-laden character of knowledge. Contemporary feminist theory, at the end of the 1960s, began by a reappropriation of these three "masters of suspicion" from the standpoint of women (I am thinking of the work of Juliet Mitchell, Sheila Rowbotham, and Sherry Ortner).

In retrospect, however, it seems obvious that feminists could not simply take over the discourse of the masters of suspicion. First, at least two of these masters—Freud and Nietzsche—had remarkably misogynist views, while Marx continued the gender-neutral and universalizing traditions of the Enlightenment and subordinated the woman question to the class struggle. Today we are living through the consequences of the exercise of suspicion toward the masters of suspicion themselves. The model of class struggle has been replaced by the "microphysics" of power, which, it is said, generates the class "subject" by imperceptibly acting upon her through the disciplinary practices of everyday life (Foucault). The energistic model of traditional psychoanalysis that seemed to view the unconscious as a pressure cooker with biological and prelinguistic "drives" pushing against the lid of the superego has been replaced by a linguistic model. Drives are not biological but imaginary, and language is the medium through which the human animal appropriates and interprets reality, confronts his or her psyche, and languishes after that "obscure" object of desire (Lacan, Kristeva). And instead of Nietzsche's often crude debunking of the conventional oppositions—Dionysiac/Apollonian, sensuous/rational, matter/form, dispersal/unity, outer/inner, madness/sanity, female/male—there is the practice of "deconstruction," which questions the very logic of dualism and the creation of closures and enclosures at the center of the text (Derrida).

Feminism and Poststructuralism

Without a doubt, contemporary poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault, Kristeva, and Derrida have cast doubt upon our views of the rational and autonomous subject and the rational and self-conscious author of the text. Their theories of the constitution of subjectivity through discursive, disciplinary, imaginary, or textual practices certainly are radical. There is little question that the study of the social and cultural construction of gender must now incorporate the work of these thinkers. Yet, despite reassurances to the contrary (as in Joan Scott's "Introduction" to *Gender and the Politics of History*), I am unconvinced that the marriage between feminism and poststructuralism can be a happy one.

Carried to its logical consequences, poststructuralism leads to a theory without addressees, to a self without a center, and to the phantasmagoric play of signifiers and signifieds in the interstices of which power and society disappear as so many 'sites of discursive *différance*.' While Foucault celebrates the disappearance of man, feminists have just discovered "woman." Are they ready to bid her farewell too? Derrida suggests, "Perhaps . . . 'woman' is not a determinable identity . . . Perhaps woman—a non-identity, non-figure, a simulacrum—is distance's very chasm, the out-distancing of distance, the interval's cadence, distance itself."[7] Are women ready to fight on the streets and in the legislatures for the needs and rights of a "non-identity," of a "chasm," of "distance" itself? Is not a feminist theory that allies itself with poststructuralism in danger of losing its very reason for being?

The current alliance between feminist theory and French poststructuralism poses political as well as intellectual problems. As has been amply demonstrated in the case of Foucault, poststructuralism is full of "empirical insights" and "normative confusions" (Nancy Fraser). These normative confusions concern the status of the subject—what mode of subjectivity can we project into the future and fight for, which itself would not be yet another product of some disciplinary matrix, yet another version of some power complex? They also concern the status of the theorist—in the name of what or whom does the theorist speak? For feminists what is called into question by this mode of

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discourse is the very idea of "engaged" or "emancipatory" theory, which is not only a form of knowledge but also the consciousness of an oppressed group. Can feminist theory be poststructuralist and emancipatory?

Opinions are divided on this issue. What appears to me really problematic at this juncture, however, is less this contemporary "Querelle des femmes," but more the loss of serious social and political criticism in feminist theory. Contemporary feminism has shifted its attention from social analysis to discourse analysis, from power itself to the politics of its representation. Undeniably, these two modes can and must inform each other, but it is also the case that from the perspective of discourse analysis macroinstitutions like the state, the economy, the legal system, and international relations tend to disappear and are replaced by "micro" practices the sum of which does not add up to these larger wholes. While social scientists like Frances Fox Piven, Theda Skocpol, Jane Jenson, and Helga Maria Hernes have called our attention to the position of women in the welfare state, to the feminization of poverty as well as to the meaning of the new right and neoconservative agendas for women, their insights have not been appropriated by more culturally oriented feminists to provide an analysis of the present. But every critical theory is first and foremost a *critical theory of the present moment,* and every critical theory must begin with a concrete analysis of contemporary contradictions and tensions. In Adorno's words, the task of such analysis is to dissolve the present into a field of oppositions between the past and the future and to release its latent utopian potentials. Feminist theory as a critical theory of the present is still waiting to be written.[8] □

Notes

[1] George Levine, Peter Brooks, Jonathan Culler, Marjorie Garber, E. Ann Kaplan and Catharine R. Stimpson, *Speaking for the Humanities,* American Council of Learned Societies Occasional Paper, No. 7, 1989. This paper contains a response to the criticisms of the practice of the humanities raised by William Bennett, Allan Bloom and Lynne Cheney.

[2] Joan Kelly Gadol, "Some Methodological Implications of the Social Relations Between the Sexes," in *Women, History and Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) pp. 1 ff.

[3] Judith Hicks Stiehm, "The Unit of Political Analysis: Our Aristotelian Hangover," in *Discovering Reality. Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science,* ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (Holland/Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1983), pp. 31–45.

[4] Janet Siltanen and Michelle Stanworth, "The Politics of Private Woman and Public Man," Janet Siltanen and Michelle Stenworth, eds. in *Women and the Public Sphere,* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 192.

[5] There is disagreement among feminist theorists as to the implication of the Rawlsian view. While Annette Baier, Iris Young, Virginia Held, and I would argue that the Rawlsian theory makes certain substantive as well as methodological assumptions that lead to the exclusion of women and of their point of view, Susan Okin maintains that the thought-experiment of Rawls's "original position" can be interpreted along the lines of a model of empathy for the least advantaged in our societies. This, she argues, should be congenial to feminists. For articles by Baier, Held, and Benhabib, see E.F. Kittay and Diana T. Meyers, eds. *Women and Moral Theory* (Rowman and Littlefield, Jersey City: 1987); for Young and Okin, see "Symposium on Feminism and Political Theory," in *Ethics,* vol. 99. No. 2 (January 1989).

[6] Joan Scott, "Introduction," *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 2.

[7] Jacques Derrida, *Spurs,* trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 49. For a thoughtful reappropriation of postmodernist ideas, see Drucilla Cornell, "Toward a Modern/Postmodern Reconstruction of Ethics," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review,* 133 (1985): 291–380.

[8] Carole Pateman and Nancy Fraser have been doing pioneering work in recent years, integrating welfare-state sociology and theories of late capitalism with feminist perspectives and discourse analysis.

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Agnes Heller and Ferenc Fehèr

DOES SOCIALISM HAVE A FUTURE?

Thoughts About Crisis and Regeneration

Does socialism have a future? This question has been asked for almost two hundred years, whenever "socialism" as theory and movement reached a critical period. There can be little doubt that socialism, both as a movement and a theory, is now living through one of its greatest trials. The increasingly blunt admissions by the ruling bureaucracies of Soviet-type societies that their long and, as far as human lives are concerned, expensive experiments have failed politically and economically threatens the socialist idea, however defined, with extinction.

Socialists used to invoke History writ large as their main witness. This witness is, however, neither just nor fair. This time it implicates those who were innocent of any crime: those socialists who were not responsible for Stalinist terror or economic fiasco, indeed the very ones who were the most outspoken critics of the tyranny and the unrealistic promises of a "planned society." Mea culpas of religious fervor with "loyalty to the cause" as an excuse no longer suffice. This time, an honest bill of particulars is needed.

What were the traditional components of socialist theory and practice? The first element, which appeared in every socialist project and movement, was to put the social question on the *political* agenda. Socialists without exception addressed the condition of the working class—poverty, short life expectancy, exploitation, cultural deprivation—as the historical fruit of capitalist society.

Second, socialist theories and movements always protested the crippling burdens of work, whereby a whole class, a majority in modern society, was chained for life to exhausting and degrading types of labor. The passionate critique of this "emancipated slavery" promised the "emancipation from labor," in some form, in the projected new society.

Third, socialists always voiced the muted but strong feeling of the masses that "market rationality" is a façade hiding the ultimate irrationality of social life when the latter is abandoned to the forces of competition and the untempered pursuit of industrial growth. The very concept of a "planned society" sprang from precisely this aspect of socialist aspiration.

Fourth, community: a communitarian way of life as opposed to the rampant individualism of the industrial world was a basic tenet of socialist belief.

Fifth, the legacy of the great political revolutions: the principle of political equality, or equality before the law, was extended to social inequalities. Socialist theories and movements did not necessarily propose absolute egalitarianism as a panacea for every social evil. Yet the issue ranked high on their agenda.

Sixth, some sort of internationalism, varying from constant and active interest in the affairs of the world (an attitude that never questioned the legitimacy of the nation state) to direct experiments with a world republic (in the form

This article is one in a recurrent series on socialist thought that Dissent *will be printing. The first in this series, by Michael Harrington, appeared in our Spring 1989 issue.*—EDS.

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of Internationals, "socialist communities," and the like), was always inseparable from the theory and practice of socialism. A late, and final, addition to the socialist agenda—one that never spread beyond the important but narrow circle of intellectuals who succumbed to the most radical version of socialist theory, movement, and party—was a romantic disillusionment with the "prosaics" of bourgeois society, and with it a longing for the great adventure of revolution.

A Look at the Socialist Legacy

Critics charge that the socialist program is obsolete, that democratic societies have already achieved much or all of what was legitimate in the socialist platform. Socialists are therefore chasing antiquated goals and upset the healthy atmosphere of the modern world. So far, only a minority of the critics is prepared to recognize the lasting validity of *all* the items on the socialist agenda; to the contrary, they allege that radical treatment of what they agree are genuine social ills would bring more pain than recovery—or remission. (In all probability, this kind of criticism will dominate the chorus in the present situation.) Since there is nothing to be gained by arguing with the most hostile and unrelenting opponent's, we agree that some critics have a point, but only to the degree that they single out the defects in socialist political forecasts. We believe, however, that the issues raised by socialists are not at all obsolete. Honest observers of contemporary society can hardly fail to find almost all the components of the socialist ideal still relevant and valid. In fact, many of these are pressing issues even if the edge of some have been blunted by welfarism and democratic social intervention. If this is so, what, then, is wrong with socialism?

We face a radically different picture in addressing the political methods recommended by socialism. In this regard, the socialist legacy is either uninventive or original, but fatal either way. The only innovation socialism added to the arsenal of modern statecraft, long before "socialists" acquired power in any country, has been the idea of a revolutionary dictatorship. After the seizure of power, this idea degenerated into totalitarian terror. In addition, there has always been an element of sterility in the socialist political imagination. Marx, who dreamed about the total elimination of political confrontation in the emancipated society of the future, was only the most consistent, but hardly alone in his conception. True enough, another type of socialist, the social democrat, or democratic socialist, came to an early reconciliation with the parliamentary system. These socialists contributed considerably to the cause of democracy by mobilizing their constituency in behalf of universal suffrage. But their fantasy remained barren. They accepted the ready-made political nostrums of their enemies on the social question. Democracy appeared to them either as the more accessible path to their own power (whose political character remained obscure) or as identical with the "rule of the majority"—and, of course, they represented the majority. The only healthy socialist innovation in the political sphere, namely, direct democracy, as it appeared in the Paris Commune, in the Russian soviets, in the working-class councils and committees of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, never had a historical opportunity to survive. More surprising, it was generally treated with more skepticism by socialist than by nonsocialist commentators.

Does, then, our conclusion read as follows? Nothing is wrong with the original agenda of socialism, while everything is wrong with its political imagination. Does the source of the crisis in socialism lie here? The present grave predicament of socialism, alas, has more complex causes.

The barrenness of the socialist political fantasy, its organic indifference to the political sphere combined with the vivacity of its social imagination, had one fatal result. A highly complex modern society, with its capitalist organization of the economy, with its almost uncontrollable drive for industrial growth (both in countries with capitalist and anticapitalist economies), and with its still evolving democracy has been reduced to a phantom termed "capitalism" not only by the Bolsheviks but by virtually all varieties of socialism. This one-

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dimensional image of the modern world generated an almost irresistible wish to create a brand-new society termed "socialism," which was to be the absolute negation of everything that had existed, even among socialists who were not necessarily enemies of every aspect of the modern world. (And those socialists who resisted this metaphysical-political abstraction often feel pangs of conscience and suffer from feelings of guilt because of their philosophical and political "pusillanimity.")

In this brand-new socialist universe every single feature of sociopolitical and cultural life had to be newly invented; every old habit, institution, and principle replaced. The new order had to be based on unprecedented principles of perfect economic management; hence a planned (in fact, a command) economy. Not even the names of age-old business and market transactions were to be tolerated in this wonder-world of hyperrational planning. "Socialism" had to generate its political dynamic, ending in the most spectacular attempt at squaring the circle: "democratic centralism." It was going to develop a new culture, a new type of human being, a new vision of the world that would surpass everything that had existed before. We now see the monstrous outcome of this boldly designed universe as a moral, political, and philosophical obscenity. Even without Stalin and the mini-Stalins, this invention evolved into a feverish figment of religious fantasy. It was going to transcend the modern world and create this world's absolute negation, a genuine paradise on earth, while proudly flaunting its "atheism."

Welfare Socialism

Parallel with the tyrannical, now spectacularly discredited attempt at the total transcendence of the modern world, were various diverse and limited forms of socialism. The best known of them is a socialist version of the welfare state. We find the debate on their "authentically socialist" character particularly sterile. More precisely, the whole debate has originated from the tacit identification of socialism with the total transcendence of the modern world even by those who opposed the foolhardy and terroristic experiment. Regardless of whether the welfare states were the creation of socialists or whether they came about as a result of conservative efforts to foreclose the danger of a bolshevik revolution, the politics of welfarism invariably embraced one or several issues on the socialist agenda. The depth and the radicalism of welfarist policies depended on how militantly socialists pressed them. In this respect, more socialism than was supported by its natural beneficiaries—the people—can only be critically demanded by the romantically disillusioned intellectual.

However, two structural deficiencies have characterized welfarist socialism. First, its socialism has been a negative, a limiting force, one that acted as an impediment to the destructive dynamic of an unrestrained market system; it was not and is not a positive and creative energy. Socialism with limitations is a very old idea. It has appeared intermittently, as postulate or practice, ever since the French Revolution and the workers' revolts against modern industrial technology. "Socialism as prevention" is necessary in the modern world because an unrestrained market system, instead of creating "harmony," destroys our natural and social environment. But at some point it is perceived as a straitjacket on society and, particularly, on the individual. This is precisely our hypothesis: "Preventive socialism" as straitjacket was the major sociopsychological background of Thatcherism, not just in Great Britain but also in some Scandinavian countries and in Israel.

Further, welfarist socialism, although opposed to the idea of transcending the modern world, was negatively and dangerously influenced by its enemy. Welfarist socialists, sensitive to the results of bolshevik philosophical and practical audacity, have thrown away all kinds of "socialist metaphysics" and proudly chosen a "prosaic socialism," without "big phrases" and "intellectual fanfare." The emptiness of daily life in welfare states and societies is, in our view, a direct outcome of this understandable, yet deeply problematic, choice.

What is collapsing in front of us is one particular form of "socialism," one with gigantic philosophical ambitions and no ethical

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conscience—but not socialism as such. And there is no reason for gloom. Good riddance, even if honest hopes and aspirations are going to be temporarily buried in the same mass grave together with criminal experiments conducted on millions of lives. This fiasco seems to be as final as anything can be in the modern world, where long-forgotten thoughts and policies unexpectedly return. At least there is no likelihood in the lifetime of now politically adult generations for a new edition of bolshevism—not without a cataclysmic collapse of civilization.

What Does The Future Hold?

But if socialists want to have a future for their cause, they cannot simply close one chapter in a long and stormy history and proceed as if nothing had happened. And this applies as well to those who were not party to the bolshevik scandal, even to those who fought against it in the name of their different conceptions of socialism. At the very least, the following "revision of scripture," and not just of the Marxist kind, seems to be inevitable.

First, socialists have to realize that the modern world does not have a single "center," wherein the whole social universe can be transformed for the better by seizing it. In all probability, no full-scale transformation of the modern world is conceivable, and none can therefore be honestly recommended, that would yield a simultaneous answer to all legitimate issues on the socialist agenda.

Second, socialism has to energize its paralyzed political imagination. In the so-called First World, democracy as an established system has a very short history of forty postwar years. In the Second World, it will make its first steps in the near future if our hopes about the Soviet transformations have at least a minimal validity. In the Third World, democracy is the exception rather than the rule, and it is facing tremendous cultural obstacles.

Furthermore, it is a liberal dogma, and not the "ultimate truth," that democracy has already attained its final form beyond which it cannot develop. Socialists can play a crucial role of explorer and discover unknown continents of statecraft if only they put the same amount of intellectual energy to use that they mobilized in discovering "the social question." Even if socialists resolutely reject the "atheist religion" of an earthly paradise, they still have to realize that no social issue can be permanently resolved without "metaphysics," that is, without a cultural and ethical dimension and without thoroughgoing changes, eventually revolution, in our established ways of life.

A painful issue, one that socialists prefer to cover with silence or self-righteous indignation, is "the socialism of the mob." It is an unmentionable part of our heritage, like a dirty scandal in a family's past. And yet socialists make life more tolerable only for themselves when they dismiss the socialist streak of Mussolini of the Republic of Salo, of the Rumanian Iron Guard, or of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Movement as a vulgar hoax or "mere plagiarism." To their grief, they cannot even question the socialist character of Mao's Red Guards, the exact replica of European fascists. Yet this is an expensive kind of family hypocrisy, one that misses crucial lessons of history. The first lesson is that "the socialism of the mob" has one cause: the power of ("capitalist" or "socialist") oligarchies and the social frustration that oligarchies create. Where there is oligarchy and, in addition, where democratic tradition is weak or nonexistent, socialism of the mob—a terrible scourge of the modern world—is always around the corner.

The second indispensable lesson is that socialists, insofar as they accept as primary the principle of freedom on which the modern world rests, owe no allegiance to a movement by virtue of its calling itself socialist. On the contrary. It is necessary that socialists learn that the secularization of socialism is a task long overdue. The world "socialism" has no aura of sanctity around it. Just like any other word in modern politics, "socialism" too can be exploited for the most infernal purposes.

What kind of responsible predictions can at this point be made about the future of socialism? In the short term, the socialists' fortune can only deteriorate. The massive disillusionment with "preventive socialism" will in all probability continue. Thatcherism

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may even win partisans among the newly emerging political forces of Eastern Europe. The real dimension and depth of the collapse of bolshevism has hit so far the politically astute observers in the West. If Stalinism's "successor state" simply walks away from its social obligations, if the Communist apparatchniks will tinker with the practice, or parody, of minimal government, if they abolish all welfare mechanisms and generate an unprecedented level of unemployment by relinquishing economic controls, even that part of the world will turn away from the name of socialism with disgust.

However, despite the present peak of Thatcherist-populist-conservative-"revolution" (or counterrevolution), it seems unthinkable that social democratic welfare socialism should be buried for good. It will have its natural resurrection to the extent that people gain their own experience with the existential insecurity of Thatcher's "popular capitalism" and her increasingly authoritarian state. How lasting this resurrection is going to be is another matter. The longevity, the extension, and the internal enrichment of welfare socialism depend in part on its ability to create "a second dimension," a cultural-ethical background for its social reforms.

Other Movements

Rebellious movements are most likely to grow and spread, whatever the political atmosphere on the parliamentary level may be. But are they socialist? Do they add anything to the strength of socialism, to the socialist agenda? Several influential movements of the last decade refrained from defining themselves as "socialist." This, in part, can be accounted for by the fact that their objectives were indeed beyond any social system; more precisely, they appealed to the common interests of every nation, every social group, every actor. (The most clear-cut examples are the antinuclear and environmentalist movements.)

But what about feminism, this major global revolution after World War Two? Is the reluctance of its sizeable contingents, perhaps its majority, to characterize itself as "socialist" merely a covert critique of the socialist agenda and the socialists' historical disregard for this epochal issue? Or is it an indication of the emergence of new phenomena that are truly radical yet no longer find accommodation within the old theoretical framework of socialism? There is no ready-made philosophical answer to this question. We are living in an age of the explosion of political fantasy. Some new products of this explosive period can and will be integrated into the socialist agenda. Some others will move beyond it, or will act parallel with it. And socialism has to find a kind of friendly cohabitation with them.

Above all, the present crisis provides a unique opportunity for the self-education of socialists. In the whole history of this theory and movement, a recurring feature has been the socialists' challenge to a world that was reluctant to accept their political or philosophical prescriptions. The time has evidently come when a simple truth has to be understood once and for all: It is socialism that exists for the world, not the world that exists for socialism.□

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Jeffrey C. Isaac

ON REBELLION & REVOLUTION

Albert Camus' *The Rebel* Reconsidered

In *The Rebel* Camus seeks to criticize "the astonishing history of European pride" that laid the groundwork for both nazism and Stalinism and that lies at the heart of our contemporary sense of moral confusion. The book reverberates with echoes of Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*. It clearly parallels the similar efforts of more philosophically esteemed contemporaries, such as Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. And it prefigures such contemporary "postmodern" theorists as Foucault and Lyotard, who similarly seek to indict the "grand narratives" that animate the modern Western world. And yet, strangely, *The Rebel* tends today to be ignored.

There are several reasons for this. One is that as a writer Camus occupies a rather peculiar no-man's-land, his work standing somewhere between the lyricism appropriate to "pure literature" and the rigor expected of the analytical philosopher. *The Rebel* is at once a lyrical reflection and a political treatise, and it is neither of them. It is a meditative reflection that violates the conventional categories and so is easily dismissed by those of a conventional literary or philosophical bent.

It also does not rest easily within any readily identifiable intellectual tradition. Both the Frankfurt School theorists and Jean-Paul Sartre participated in, and reconstituted, the tradition of Western Marxism, a fact that gave their works an enduring significance. Similarly Hannah Arendt's writing self-consciously operated within the tradition of German phenomenology and played an important role in shaping American academic political philosophy. Although Camus's writing clearly had its own intellectual sources, it was in style and substance more iconoclastic. It was unanchored in the academic institutions within which most "serious" theoretical discussion of politics has tended to take place. And although *The Rebel* was sufficiently anomalous to ensure its absence from the mainstream of political theory, it was also sufficiently philosophical to foreclose its entry into a more popular political discourse in the manner of Orwell's *1984* or Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.

But probably the most important reason for its eclipse is the political context in which it was written, highly charged by the onset of the cold war and by the personal clash between Camus and Sartre that seemed to incarnate this polarization. *The Rebel* was clearly a polemic against communism in general and the French Communist party (PCF) in particular. And it was received as such. But the book was read on the basis of the kind of "cowardly logic" that Camus had always resisted, and it was almost universally misinterpreted. Cold war liberals welcomed Camus's anticommunism with open arms, and interpreted his calls for limits, moderation, and freedom of expression as an endorsement of their own worldview. And the left, both within the PCF and Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, responded to Camus's criticism by dismissing *The Rebel* as a retreat from history and an abandonment of a socialist vision.[1] A cold war consensus thus emerged about Camus's "liberalism."

Now is a good time to reread *The Rebel*. In it

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Camus offers us a political vision that is neither Marxist nor liberal. It falls, I argue, within the range of democratic socialism. But Camus's democratic socialism is not simply a joining of democratic norms to a socialist vision. It is based upon a much more serious questioning of the optimism and humanism of the Enlightenment. It is, in short, a democratic socialism "without appeal," with no reliance upon any kind of transcendental imperative and with no guarantees of historical success.

Marxism

The major problem *The Rebel* seeks to address is that "curious transposition peculiar to our times" that has led to "slave camps under the flag of freedom" and "massacres justified by philanthropy"—Stalinism. It is true that Camus sees the development of "totalitarianism" in both Russia and Germany as having "crippled" our judgment and forced "innocence to justify itself."[2] But nazism is not his major problem. He devotes but eleven pages to it, describing it as an "ethics of the gang" and an "insensate passion for nothingness." He clearly believes this passion to be symptomatic of the nihilism so prevalent in his day, the product of the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of twentieth-century bourgeois civilization. But his problem is set by Stalin. Unlike fascism, he writes, Russian Communism openly aspires toward universal freedom: "That is its strength, its deliberate significance, and its importance in our history. . . . [i]t has appropriated the metaphysical ambition that this book describes, the erection, after the death of God, of a city of man finally deified. The name revolution, to which Hitler's adventure had no claim, was once deserved by Russian Communism, and although it apparently deserves it no longer, it claims that one day it will deserve it forever. . . ." Camus here strikes a theme that he returns to throughout the book, and which interpreters have failed to hear at their own peril—that communism is important for our history because it first articulates, and then betrays, a value worth defending, the value of human freedom. Although Camus proceeds to distinguish between rebellion and revolution, and to criticize the latter in what approaches categorical terms, it is clear in Camus's book that Russian Communism is a problem not because it threatens "Western Freedom" (it is notable that the guiding geographical division in the book is not East vs. West but "European pride" vs. Mediterranean courage and love of life) but because it has appropriated and devalued the rebellious impulse of humanism and the revolutionary means sometimes necessary to empower this impulse.

This leads us to Camus's analysis of Marxism, which both recapitulates certain Nietzschean criticisms of socialism and parallels the "Got That Failed" view of Koestler, Silone, Gide, and others with whom Camus was associated. Marxian socialism, he writes, deifies man, and consequently "has assumed some of the characteristics of traditional religions." This has a number of dimensions. One is a "scientific Messianism" of bourgeois origin, characterized by a naiveté about industry and technology. Another is the historicism that Marx draws from Hegel, which for Camus entails that "Values are . . . only to be found at the end of history. Until then there is no suitable criterion on which to base a judgment of value. One must act and live in terms of the future. All morality becomes provisional." Camus is only half facetious when he observes that "Marx is only anti-capitalist in so far as capitalism is out of date," suggesting that Marx's historicism undermines the possibility of a fully worked out ethical justification of both socialist ends and socialist means.

For Camus this historicism is joined with a prophetic vision of communism as "the riddle of history solved," the "reconciliation of the wolf and the lamb," the end of human alienation. And it is here that Marx's theory prefigures the atrocities of Stalinism: "In the perspective of the Marxist prophecy, nothing matters . . . when the bourgeois class has disappeared, the proletariat will establish the rule of universal man at the summit of production, by the very logic of productive development. What does it matter that this should be accompanied by dictatorship and violence? In this New Jerusalem, echoing with the roar of miraculous machinery, who will still remember the cry of the victim?

This diagnosis of Marxism is certainly familiar. It is generally associated with "end of ideology" views about the dangers of social

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transformation and the value of liberalism.[3] But Camus's discussion is clearly not in this genre. Marx, he writes, blends "the most valid critical method with a Utopian Messianism of highly dubious value." Here he acknowledges the genuine tensions within Marx's thought, and the possibility of these tensions being developed in a number of directions, critical as well as mystifying. "The task of historical materialism can only be to establish a method of criticism of contemporary society; it is only capable of making suppositions, unless it abandons its scientific attitude, about the society of the future." Marx not only provides a compelling "criticism of contemporary society," he also provides a theoretical framework capable not of prophesies, but of prognoses about the future.

In what, we may ask, lies the validity of Marx's criticism? Camus is clear:

> His most profitable undertaking has been to reveal the reality that is hidden behind the formal values of which the bourgeois of his time made a great show. His theory of mystification is still valid, because it is in fact universally true, and is equally applicable to revolutionary mystifications. . . . [Bourgeois] morality prospered on the prostitution of the working classes. . . . above all, we must recognize and state that the extreme decadence brought about by the economy of prosperity was to compel Marx to give first place to social and economic relationships and to magnify still more his prophecy of the reign of man.

This is a remarkable paragraph. In it Camus, the anticommunist, endorses Marx's critique of bourgeois mystification and provides a sympathetic justification of his emphasis upon economic determinants. Further, Camus observes, it was Marx's aversion to bourgeois cynicism that "compelled" him to magnify his prophesy. The prophesy is still dangerous, but here Camus views it almost as rhetorical strategy, motivated by a desire to fight injustice and grounded in a compelling analysis of the structure of capitalist society. The moral outrage of Marx is a point to which Camus later returns. He writes:

> It is undoubtedly correct to emphasize the ethical demands that form the basis of the Marxist dream . . . [and that constitute] the real greatness of Marx. The very core of his theory was that work is profoundly dignified and unjustly despised. . . . By demanding for the worker real riches, which are not the riches of money but of leisure and creation, he has reclaimed, despite all the appearance to the contrary, the dignity of man. In doing so, and this can be said with conviction, he never wanted the additional degradation that has been imposed on man in his name."

Camus does not absolve Marx of historical responsibility, but his comments suggest that this is an enormously difficult question, not amenable to the kind of simplifications that cold war liberals were wont to indulge in.

Russian Communism, Camus insists, is "forgetful of its real principles." Marxism thus has value; it is one of the legitimate heirs of the modern rebellious impulse. But Camus's subtlety does not end with Marx. Stalinism, he asserts, was something "Marx never dreamed of. . . . *Nor indeed, did Lenin,* though he took a decisive step toward establishing a military Empire" [emphasis added]. In Camus's view Lenin is Marx's disciple, and, as such, he helps turn Marx's theory into a doctrine and erects a church—the party-state—to incarnate its truth. Camus's discussion of this is sharply critical, but even here he acknowledges the unintended and contingent nature of the revolution's ultimate outcome. One would not want to overemphasize Camus's sympathy for bolshevism. But he writes in a modulated fashion, observing of the Bolshevik seizure of power: "From this moment on, the history of the interior struggles of the party, from Lenin to Stalin, is summed up in the struggle between the workers' democracy and military and bureaucratic dictatorship; in other words, between justice and expediency." The interior struggles of the party: Camus does not provide a historical analysis, but his comments acknowledge the authentic aspirations to which the Bolsheviks gave voice, and view Russian revolutionary history as possibility rather than preordained outcome.

Camus was an anticommunist. The crimes of the Bolsheviks, of Stalinism, and of the post-Stalin Soviet regimes convinced him of the dangers of communist ideology, dangers that can be traced to Lenin and, before him, to Marx's own messianic vision. But Camus also

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acknowledges the complexity of the Marxian tradition and the complexity of modern history, in which Marxists are not the only agents. He refuses to absolve certain Marxists of responsibility for the crimes they have committed and for those they have justified. But in *The Rebel* Camus clearly appreciates the open-endedness of the Marxist tradition and he exhibits a degree of openness toward its impulses and understandings. It is not surprising that, in the hysterical atmosphere of the cold war, his sober analysis would be misunderstood and his critical appreciation ignored. And the defensiveness of the French left, no doubt fueled by the offensiveness of the right, in a truly vicious circle of recrimination, only served to further alienate Camus, himself a proud and self-righteous man. And so the legend of Camus's virulent anti-Marxism was founded.

Socialism vs. Liberalism

If the above analysis is correct, then clearly we must also reevaluate the purported "liberalism" of *The Rebel*. There are clear affinities between Camus's thought and certain versions of modern, particularly French, liberalism. One immediately thinks of Constant's defense of individual liberty and of Tocqueville's criticism of the overcentralizing tendencies of the French state and his advocacy of voluntary associations. Two central terms of *The Rebel* are moderation and limits, and these certainly sound liberal. And yet it would be a serious historical error to interpret them in this way. Camus is a libertarian socialist, but he is not a liberal.

In fact, his remarks about liberalism in *The Rebel* are uniformly critical. In discussing the French Revolution and its "virtuous" excesses, Camus observes:

> The bourgeoisie succeeded in reigning during the entire nineteenth century only by referring itself to abstract principles. Less worthy than Saint-Just, it simply made use of this frame of reference as an alibi, while employing, on all occasions, the opposite values. By its essential corruption and disheartening hypocrisy, it helped to discredit, for good and all, the principles it proclaimed. *Its culpability in this regard is infinite"* [emphasis added].

Or again, in discussing the excesses of socialism, he concedes that "undoubtedly, it has nothing but scorn for the formal and mystifying morality to be found in bourgeois society." And in the concluding sections of the book, where he criticizes the various forms of the nihilism that he sees at the heart of our current ills, he notes: "Such a plant could, in fact, thrive only in the fertile soil of accumulated inequalities." But perhaps the clearest statement of this view is Camus's essay "Bread and Freedom," written in 1953, two years after *The Rebel* was published and at the height of the cold war.

This essay makes explicit what is implicit, but not undiscernible, in *The Rebel*—Camus's socialism. Here he writes about "the great event of the twentieth century," the forsaking of freedom by what he alternately calls "the workers' movements" and "the revolutionary movement," which had assumed responsibility for realizing freedom and justice. He observes that the left fatefully confused the depredations of bourgeois freedom with freedom itself:

> For it should have been said merely that bourgeois freedom was a hoax—and not all freedom. It should have been said simply that bourgeois freedom was not freedom or, in the best of cases, not yet freedom. But that there were liberties to be won and never to be relinquished again. It is quite true that there is no possibility of freedom for the man tied to his lathe all day long who, when evening comes, crowds into a single room with his family. But this fact condemns a class, a society and the slavery it assumes, not freedom itself. . . .

The Russian Revolution of 1917, he goes on,

> marked the dawn of real freedom and the greatest hope the world has known. But that revolution, surrounded from the outside, threatened within and without, provided itself with a police force. Inheriting a . . . doctrine that pictured freedom as suspect, the revolution little by little became stronger, and the world's greatest hope hardened into the world's most efficient dictatorship.

Once again, Camus identifies the value of the tradition of Marxian socialism. His conclusion underscores this:

> The false freedom of bourgeois society has not suffered meanwhile. What was killed in the Moscow trials and elsewhere, and in the revolutionary camps . . . is not bourgeois freedom but the free-

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> dom of 1917. Bourgeois freedom can meanwhile have recourse to all possible hoaxes. The trials and perversions of revolutionary society furnish it at one and the same time with a good conscience and with arguments against its enemies.

In the light of these comments, it is remarkable that *The Rebel* could be read as an apologia for Western liberalism in the face of "the threat" of communism, for Camus is clearly intent on denying bourgeois freedom its "good conscience." But for him this clearly means that the left must learn from history and cease to furnish its enemies with arguments by justifying communist oppression.

Camus positions himself between East and West, a "free-lance" intellectual refusing aid and comfort to either camp. As he writes,

> the characteristic of the world we live in is just that cynical dialectic which sets up injustice against enslavement while strengthening one by the other. . . . When anyone brings up the slave in the colonies and calls for justice, he is reminded of prisoners of Russian concentration camps, and vice versa. . . . In such a disgusting attempt at outbidding, one thing only does not change—the victim, who is always the same. A single value is constantly outraged or prostituted—freedom. . . .[4]

Individual freedom—of movement, of expression, of love—is certainly the value that Camus wishes to uphold. But his point is not simply to insist upon the universality of human freedom. It is to underscore the necessarily communal character of freedom, both as an achievement and as an experienced reality. In response to the dizzying madness of the twentieth century, he proposes:

> [T]he first progressive step for a mind overwhelmed with the strangeness of things is to realize that this feeling of strangeness is shared by all men and that human reality, in its entirety, suffers from the distance which separates it from the rest of the universe. The malady experienced by a single man becomes a mass plague. In our daily trials rebellion plays the same role as does the "cogito" in the realm of thought: it is the first piece of evidence. But this evidence lures the individual from his solitude. It founds its first value on the whole human race. I rebel—therefore we exist.

Camus's ethic is an ethic of solidarity. As he insists: "In assigning oppression a limit within which begins the dignity common to all men, rebellion . . . put in the first rank of its frame of reference an obvious complicity among men, a common texture, the solidarity of chains, a communication between human being and human being which makes men both similar and united."

This solidarity is, appropriately enough, inspired by socialism. Its two most visible manifestations in the twentieth century are "revolutionary trade unionism" and "the syndicalist and libertarian spirit" unleashed, and then suppressed, by the Russian Revolution. In one of the concluding sections of *The Rebel*, "Rebellion and Art," Camus favorably quotes Nietzsche's aphorism: "Instead of the judge and the oppressor, the creator." This has often been interpreted as an expression of aesthetic withdrawal, but it is in fact a deeply and self-consciously political statement. Camus points to "the drama of our times in which work, entirely subordinated to production, has ceased to be creative. Industrial society will open the way to a new civilization only by restoring to the worker the dignity of a creator." Art for Camus is one way of insisting upon the value of the world and man's place in it. But it is also a paradigm of the kind of free creativity that must characterize a genuinely emancipated society. Camus stands against both bourgeois hypocrisy and a "socialism of the gallows," and for both democracy and socialism.

If the central concept of *The Rebel* is, unsurprisingly, rebellion, then the distinction that drives the essay is that between rebellion and revolution. And this distinction has usually been interpreted so as to support the reading of Camus as a liberal. On this view the rebel is someone who quietly, and always circumspectly, affirms human dignity while avoiding the fateful entanglements of political commitment and organizational membership. The revolutionary, on the other hand, is one who seeks to transform society as a whole and who is willing to license any means in the pursuit of this end. The rebel is a kind of Popperian liberal, the revolutionary a Marxian socialist, if not an out-and-out Stalinist.

On the basis of everything I have already

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argued, this view hardly seems plausible. And yet there is some support for it in *The Rebel*. In the chapter entitled "Rebellion and Revolution," which punctuates his critique of Marxism, Camus criticizes the view, associated with Sartre, that the authentic rebel must become a revolutionary. On the contrary, he insists that "The revolutionary is simultaneously a rebel or he is not a revolutionary, but a policeman or a bureaucrat who turns against rebellion. But if he is a rebel, he ends up taking sides against the revolution. . . ." This sounds like a categorical damnation of revolution. And yet, the sentence that follows reads: "So much so that there is absolutely no progress from one attitude to the other, but coexistence and endlessly increasing contradiction." Let us explore this unusual contradiction, in which the terms neither negate each other nor are dialectically transcended but rather coexist.

In the paragraph that directly precedes the one from which I have been quoting, Camus notes that "the longing for rest and peace must itself be thrust aside; it coincides with the acceptance of iniquity. . . . The future cannot be foreseen and it may be that the historical renaissance is impossible. . . . [But] this kind of resignation is, quite simply, rejected here; we must stake everything on the renaissance." The rebel is thus not a saint and cannot insulate himself from the political fray. The problem is whether rebellion, "without laying claim to an innocence that is impossible . . . can discover the principle of reasonable culpability." The rebellious pole of the contradiction is thus a bit more complicated than it seemed at first appearance.

Camus in fact distinguishes not between rebellion and revolution, but between rebellion and what he variously calls "absolute revolution," "historical revolution," and "Caesarean revolution." While the latter views human beings as infinitely malleable and rejects any limits or standards in its crusading zeal, the former "is the affirmation of a nature common to all men, which eludes the world of power." It is a particular kind of historical revolution—communism—that nihilistically negates the present in the interest of the future.

We seem to confront, Camus observes, an "apparent dilemma" of either "silence or murder—in either case, a surrender," in the first case a withdrawal from politics, or at least from radical politics, that "consecrates injustice," in the second an embracing of historical necessity that consecrates revolutionary destruction. "There is, it would seem, an ineradicable opposition between the movement of rebellion and the attainments of revolution. But these contradictions only exist in the absolute. They suppose a world and a method of thought without mediation." The representatives of these two absolute poles are Koestler's yogi and commisar. "But the difference between these two types of men is not, as has been stated, the difference between ineffectual purity and expediency. The former chooses only the ineffectiveness of abstention and the second the ineffectiveness of destruction. Because both reject the conciliatory value that rebellion, on the contrary, reveals, they offer us only two kinds of impotence. . . ." The posture of absolute moral righteousness is not pure, but it is inexpedient. It accomplishes nothing and consecrates injustice with its refusal to act. And the policy of pure expedience is likewise neither pure nor expedient, consuming first its children and then itself in an orgy of destructiveness. Both are forms of absolutism that, while in ineradicable conflict, paradoxically achieve the same result—human debasement and injustice.

Camus proposes, in contrast, a mediated view of things: "A revolutionary action which wishes to be coherent in terms of its origins should be embodied in an active consent to the relative." Perfect freedom and perfect justice are impossible. There is no end of human history. Our human condition compels us to act in order to humanize the world. In order to act we must develop and sustain practices of resistance and reconstruction, organizations, strategies. We must employ political means. We must be, in this sense, revolutionaries. But the human condition also makes the future indeterminate and the ultimate consequences of our acts unknowable. We must thus act soberly, with commitment and circumspection: "Any historical enterprise can only therefore be a more or less reasonable or justifiable adventure. It is primarily a risk. Insofar as it is a risk it cannot be used to justify any excess or any ruthless and absolutist position."

Camus draws two major consequences from

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this argument. The first is the necessity of freedom of speech and of civil freedom. This is so important that Camus, having just written of the need to "aspire to the relative," insists that an authentic revolution "would allow absolute freedom of speech." But Camus does not argue that freedom of speech is a natural right, given by God or Nature. Rather, given the relativity and indeterminacy of human existence, it is a necessary means of any freedom or justice worth speaking of. His arguments are uncompromising but pragmatic. Suppression of free speech denies from the beginning "that small amount of existence we find in ourselves." It supposes that we cannot trust ourselves and, fatefully, that our present integrity and freedom can be sacrificed to the future, to be retrieved at the proper moment. Further, freedom of expression is necessary to discover justice, which is not a Platonic form but a fragile human achievement:

> Even when justice is not realized, freedom preserves the power to protest and guarantees human communication. Justice in a silent world, justice enslaved and mute, destroys mutual complicity and finally can no longer be justice. The revolution of the twentieth century has arbitrarily separated, for overambitious ends of conquest, two inseparable ideas. Absolute freedom mocks at justice. Absolute justice denies freedom. To be fruitful, the two ideas must find their limits in each other.

Once again, freedom is a necessary condition of the justice that revolution, properly, seeks to achieve. And thus Camus's advocacy of freedom is inextricably linked to his advocacy of socialism.

Secondly, Camus rejects the doctrine of absolute nonviolence, which "is the negative basis of slavery and its acts of violence." Violence, he writes, is "a relative risk, which causes a rupture in communication." It tears the basic fabric of humanity. But "systematic violence is part of the order of things," and categorical nonviolence is itself culpable, because to renounce the exercise of power is simply to submit to existing power. So violence can never be ruled out in principle. But "it must therefore preserve, for the rebel, its provisional character . . . and must always be bound, if it cannot be avoided, to a personal responsibility and an immediate risk." This is why the kindest words in *The Rebel* are reserved for "the fastidious assassins," Kaliayev and the Russian terrorists of 1905, who treated violence with the gravest of attitudes and incarnated its risks in their own lives. "Violence can only be an extreme limit which combats another form of violence, as, for example, in the case of an insurrection. . . . Authentic arts of rebellion will only consent to take up arms for institutions that limit violence, not for those which codify it." Revolutionary violence is justifiable when it is necessary to combat injustice and when it is employed soberly, in a limited fashion, with the intention, "announced as often as possible," of mitigating violence and restoring human solidarity.

The Rebel is thus not a statement of political withdrawal and liberal acquiescence, nor is it a categorical critique of political revolution. It is a critique of "historical revolution," a revolutionary attitude embodied in a certain kind of twentieth-century Marxist theory and practice. And it is a warning about the dangers of invoking revolutionary "ends" of history to justify oppressive and murderous means. Camus's point is that our political practices and institutions must always remain true to our ends. Revolution is a means of rebellion. It is a way to achieve greater human freedom and justice. As such, it must always be judged pragmatically, in the light of our own inherent limitations as makers of history and also in the light of the barbarous history of twentieth century revolution.

Camus and Postmodern Politics

Camus's criticisms of liberalism and Marxism are clearly in the vein of much recent "postmodernist" writing.[5] They reflect a similar sense of the breakdown of the metaphysical foundations of modernity, in Camus's case determined by his own experience of the mid-twentieth century, "a period which, in a space of fifty years, uproots, enslaves, and kills seventy million human beings." This is the point of Camus's ethics of the absurd, premised upon "the encounter between human inquiry and the silence of the universe." Camus rejects any notion of a necessity, whether natural or

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historical, which can *a priori* ground our morality.

Camus also shares with postmodernists the view that the "prideful" grand narratives of modern humanism are themselves partly responsible for the horrors of the twentieth century. He describes modernity, in language foreshadowing Foucault, as

> a drama that began with the end of the ancient world and of which the final words have not been spoken. From this moment, man decides to live by his own means. Progress, from the time of Sade up to the present day, has consisted in gradually enlarging the stronghold where, according to his own rules, man without God brutally wields power. . . . Man, at the culmination of his rebellion, incarcerated himself; from Sade's lurid castle to the concentration camps, man's greatest liberty consisted only in building the prison of his own crimes.

The very project of human emancipation is somehow flawed.

And yet, if my argument is correct, we should not overemphasize Camus's affinities with contemporary postmodernism. For if thinkers in this idiom tend to abandon humanism altogether, to deconstruct its premises, and to celebrate the decay of universalism into a heterogeneity of local impulses, Camus will clearly have none of this. In defending rebellion, he seeks to reconstruct a vital and sober humanism. His writing is infused with moral purpose and moral outrage. Human dignity is his watchword, and he insists that this requires a commitment, critical to be sure, to political practices that seek to enhance human freedom, which "is good for all men." His tone, his language, and his commitments are thus, in critical respects, far from those of contemporary postmodernists. And yet he is all the more interesting precisely because his political vision is joined with an abandonment of metaphysical codes and moral absolutes.

According to Camus, the universe is silent. It does not tell us how to be and what to do. And yet this does not mean that anything goes. The danger of nihilism is a major theme of *The Rebel*. If one manifestation of this danger is the cruelty practiced in the name of political absolutes, another, equally dangerous, is the refusal to believe that we are morally constrained at all. How then does Camus understand moral constraint? This is a difficult question, one that would take us beyond *The Rebel*. But there are some hints here, and they relate to Camus's unabashed naturalism.

Like Hannah Arendt, Camus, while unable to subscribe to implausible doctrines of natural law, insists that there is such a thing as the human condition. The central feature of this condition is the limited nature of all humans, as natural creatures who share a common earth and a common tendency to infuse their recalcitrant world with meaning. We are, Camus insists, bound in "mutual complicity." Injustice denies this complicity by privileging ruling elites and classes and, in its extreme form, totalitarianism, utterly destroys it by establishing a "silent world . . . enslaved and mute," in which "dialogue and personal relations have been replaced by propaganda or polemic, which are two kinds of monologue."

Dialogue is thus at the heart of Camus's ethical theory, as it is for so many contemporary theorists. The human condition requires, to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, that we either hang together or hang separately. This does not require that we subscribe to any eternal or absolute moral codes. It simply requires that we acknowledge our common fate, the possibilities offered by our mutual recognition, and the dangers posed, more than ever in the twentieth century, by our refusal to do so. As Camus writes: "If injustice is bad for the rebel, it is not because it contradicts an eternal idea of justice, but because it perpetuates the silent hostility that separates the oppressor from the oppressed. It kills that small part of existence that can be realized on this earth through the mutual understanding of men. . . . The mutual understanding and communication discovered by rebellion can survive only in the free exchange of conversation."

Camus's view here has powerful affinities with the writing of more recent thinkers like Adam Michnik in Poland and George Konrad in Hungary. Michnik's work, like Camus's, is marked by a sense of the need to equilibrate means and ends and of the ambiguities of political commitment. His essay "Maggots and

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Angels" is a brilliant critique of political self-righteousness. As he writes, in a Camusian vein, "I do believe in the creative powers of our actions. . . . But we live and will live among people who think otherwise. We must learn to live with them and teach them to live with us. We must learn the difficult art of political compromise, without which authentic pluralism will not be possible."[6] Michnik also expresses a Camusian desire to articulate a political "third way," navigating through the jagged thaws in the frozen geopolitics of the cold war. What image better suits Camus's call for a "solidarity of chains" than the pluralistic movement of Polish workers, peasants, and intellectuals demanding at one and the same time their bread and their freedom, a demand reverberating on both sides of the cold war? Konrad's *Anti-Politics* too, and the democratic civil society of a demilitarized Europe that it underwrites, echoes Camus's observation that the political world "makes us sick," as well as his passionate commitment to a rejuvenated "art of living."[7]

The spirit of Camus is thus very much alive. Of course his work is not without its problems, both philosophical and political. The power of his prose often outpaces the lucidity and rigor of his arguments. His treatment of philosophical themes, particularly regarding Hegel and Marx, is sometimes wanting. And, it could be argued, his recourse to language about an "irrepressible demand of human nature, of which the Mediterranean . . . guards the secret" relies upon an implicit essentialism. But in considering such problems, it is important to set Camus's enterprise in its proper context. "The important thing," he insists, "is not, as yet, to get to the root of things, but, the world being what it is, to know how to live in it." Of course such an injunction, however incisively it serves to repudiate flawed aspirations for *the* answer to our problems, cannot insulate his thinking from criticism. In any case, Camus would be the first to insist that we should do our own thinking. This, after all, is the spirit of rebellion as he understands it.

The task of reconstructing a theory and practice of democratic socialism in a disenchanted world stands before us. How do we conceptualize, let alone justify, humanist values and socialist practices once we decisively abandon the metaphysical guarantees of natural law or historical necessity? Given such a world, can our beliefs and practices be grounded upon anything more than our own insistence, on our own will to power? Camus does not fully answer these questions, but his analysis poses them, and in an honest, nondoctrinaire way skeptical of the grand claims of modernity but also wary of a wholesale abandonment of its humanist aspirations. As Camus once put it, "It is essential for us to know whether man, without the help of either the eternal or rationalistic thought, can unaided create his own values."[8] As he knew, this is not merely a deeply intellectual problem, but an urgently practical one as well. □

Notes

[1] See Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), on the acrimonious dispute that attended the publication of *The Rebel*. Most of the recent left-wing intellectual histories of the period are equally dismissive. See Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Ronald Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World* (London: Verso, 1980); and Fred Hirsch, *The French New Left* (Boston: South End Press, 1981). For an alternative, see David Sprintzen, *Albert Camus: A Critical Portrait* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

[2] See the Introduction to *The Rebel* (New York: Vintage, 1956). All subsequent references to *The Rebel* appear in the text of this article.

[3] See J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: Norton, 1970).

[4] Albert Camus, "Bread and Freedom," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (New York: Vintage, 1960), pp. 89–91, 92, 93.

[5] See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York, N.Y.: Pantheon, 1984); and my "Arendt, Camus, and the Politics of Postmodernism," *Praxis International* (forthcoming).

[6] Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[7] George Konrad, *Anti-Politics* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1984).

[8] Albert Camus, "Pessimism and Courage," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, p. 58.

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Barbara Ehrenreich

FEMINISM AND CLASS CONSOLIDATION

In the late fifties marrying an economic equal was neither necessary nor possible. Most middle-class—or for that matter, blue-collar working-class—men could expect to earn enough to support a wife and children. Moreover, most women who intended to marry and have children did not invest their prime childbearing years in postgraduate education and professional advancement. In 1960, just over 30 percent of American women worked outside the home, and most of those did so because their husband's income was plainly inadequate or because their children had grown up, leaving the house quiet and eternally tidy.

A decade or so later, enough had changed so that the marriage of equals was both possible and, in most cases, necessary. Most American men no longer earned enough to support a family unassisted, and most American women—including wives and mothers—had gone out and gotten jobs. Many married women went to work simply to help compensate for their husbands' declining earning power. In the early years of the women's movement, feminists often cited the estimate that 70 percent of working women were in the work force because their husbands' incomes were far too low to support a family. At the same time, later marriages and the 50 percent divorce rate guaranteed that the great majority of women would have to support themselves and possibly their children on their own earnings at some point in their lives. By the seventies, only the wives of the rich could imagine that employment was simply an option.

But in the professional middle class, women were working not only because they had to, not only because they feared not finding a suitable husband—or any husband at all—but because they wanted to. They were in fact not just working—a part-time job while the children are at school, a stab at catering, or some other expansion of a domestic skill—they were pursuing demanding, fast-track professional careers with at least as much energy and intensity as their male colleagues. And this was the result not merely of crude economic pressure but of feminism.

The feminist movement has of course affected the lives of women in all social classes, and it has changed women's lives in ways that have little to do with economics or the dynamics of any particular class. By abolishing the cruder forms of sex discrimination, the movement opened doors for women of all classes, races, and conditions. Women won the right to abortion, the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to equal educational opportunity. And feminists are still working to expand these rights and win new ones—such as subsidized child care, pay equity, and paid maternity leave. Perhaps above all the feminist movement has won enormous gains for all women in the intangible areas of dignity and self-esteem. But for our story, what is important about feminism is that it helped save the professional middle class from economic decline and at the same time healed it of that subtler form of decline that Betty Friedan had described two decades earlier as "progressive demoralization."

Among women's economic gains, perhaps the greatest single achievement of the feminist movement has been the opening up of formerly male professions, such as law, medicine, and management. For most of this century the professions have been the occupational fortress of the middle class, but until recently they were reserved for men. The very traits that early twentieth-century reformers sought to attach to the professions—objectivity, scientific rationality, and a dispassionate concern for society—were conceived of as quintessentially masculine traits. In 1871, for example, the president of the American Medical Association had this to say on the subject of women in medicine:

> Certain women seek to rival men in manly sports . . . and the strong-minded ape them in all things, even in

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dress. In doing so, they may command a sort of admiration such as all monstrous productions inspire, especially when they tend towards a higher type than their own.

Throughout the twentieth century, women who aspired to a profession were directed toward those intellectually "softer" occupations—nursing, social work, teaching—that are deemed "semi-professions" by the sociologists and rewarded commensurately by employers. Those who persisted in trying to gain entrance to the top professions often faced harassment from professors and fellow students, followed by marginalization within their profession. Ellen Richards, for example, one of America's first female chemists, was segregated from the male students when she attended MIT in the 1860s, and eventually consigned to what was felt to be a more suitable "science" for a woman—home economics.

Feminism, when it reemerged in the 1970s, launched a two-pronged attack on the traditionally male professions. On the one hand, women demanded to be let in on an equal footing. On the other hand, they questioned the core assumptions of the professions—their exclusivity, their claims to scientific objectivity and public service. In medicine, for example, feminists simultaneously demanded that women be admitted to the profession and attacked it for its sexism, racism, and greed—qualities that seemed to betray any claims to objectivity and public service. Feminists wanted women to be doctors, but they also wanted to abolish medicine as an elite profession and encourage the skills and participation of more humble health workers, lay practitioners (such as the self-trained midwives who began practicing illegally in the seventies), and the "consumers" of health care. With all the professions, feminists wanted, paradoxically at times, to open them up—and close them down.

This ambivalence reflected a larger quandary. Did feminists want to overthrow what they recognized to be a "male-dominated, capitalist society"? Or did they simply want women to take their place within it? Did they want revolution, or assimilation? The radical answer had drawn confidence from the student left and the black insurgency, but as those movements waned in the early seventies, assimilation began to look like the only practical strategy. I remember how betrayed many radical and left-leaning feminists felt at a 1975 conference held by the New York City chapter of the National Organization for Women, which featured, among the usual workshops on feminist political themes, sessions on how to "make it" in the corporate world. Surely the aim of the struggle was not to propel a few women to the top of a fundamentally unjust hierarchy, in which most women counted for little more than cheap labor. Yet as many quite radical feminists later came to realize, there is no way that an economically marginalized group can be expected to "wait for the revolution," letting moral purity compensate for certain poverty. Mainstream feminism came to stand unambiguously for assimilation, with the proviso or at least vague hope that women would somehow "humanize" the positions into which they were assimilated.

So, empowered by feminism—even if they did not always regard themselves as feminists—women poured into what had been almost exclusively male domains. In medicine, only 9 percent of first-year students were female in 1969; in 1987, 37 percent were female. In law, women had taken only 8 percent of the degrees awarded in 1973; ten years later women took 36 percent. In business, only 4.9 percent of the MBAs graduating in 1973 were women; ten years later 28.9 percent were women.

Not that women have achieved anything like full equality within these professions. A representation of 30 to 40 percent is far short of 50 percent. And within these areas of endeavor, women still find subtle barriers blocking the way to the top. Women doctors are likely to choose, or be channeled into, the relatively low-status field of pediatrics rather than, say, surgery. Women academics are well-represented among the junior faculty, sparse among the tenured senior faculty. Businesswomen complain about the "glass ceiling" that stands between them and the boardroom, and feel blocked at all levels by the almost impenetrably masculine culture of the corporate world. But the fact remains that in little more than a decade women increased their representation among the most prestigious and lucrative professions by 300 to 400 percent. As a change in the fortunes of women, that has to be counted somewhere up near the achievement of suffrage.

It was an achievement, however, that was sharply limited by class. The chief beneficiaries of the opening of the professions were women who already had the advantages of good schools, an encouraging home life, and the money and leisure for higher education. A 1976 study showed, for example, that the women clambering into medical school were likely to come from the same class background as the men who were already there. Nor were there gains of comparable magnitude within the traditionally male blue-collar skilled occupations, in part because so many of these occupations were themselves in decline. While the percentage of

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women in professional training was rising from less than 10 percent up to 40 percent, the proportion of women construction workers and skilled craftspersons did not reach 10 percent.

So while some women moved into positions of visibility and even power, the average working woman, who is not a professional and not likely to be college-educated, is still pretty much where she always was: waiting on tables, emptying wastebaskets, or pounding a keyboard for five or six dollars an hour. If the recent opening up of the professions has been feminism's greatest victory, it is a victory whose sweetness the majority of American women will never taste.

But it is the change within the professional middle class that concerns us here. The chasm that existed within that class—separating its achievers from its menial laborers, its husbands from its wives—was potentially bridged. A young women no longer had to secure her membership in the middle class through the tenuous pact of marriage. She didn't have to marry a doctor; she could be one. It remained for the young men of this class to overcome their resentment of the new female competition and understand that they in turn could be married to doctors or lawyers instead of mere wives.

By the seventies this change was well under way. The old notion that a working wife was a sure sign of male inadequacy was hard to find in any class. As I argued in *The Hearts of Men,* the traditional masculine ideal as husband, father, and sole breadwinner had been going out of style for decades. The reasons for this had less to do with feminism, which did not become a mass movement until the early seventies, than with a consumer culture that was increasingly reaching out to men as consumers in their own right. In the words of the early *Playboy* magazine, which should be seen as a promoter of the new masculine ideology as well as of soft pornography, wives were "parasites," trapping men into lives of perpetual toil to support *their* consumerism. Men earned the money, why shouldn't they spend it on themselves?

Feminism, when it came along, offered a socially conscious rationale for this somewhat churlish attitude. It allowed men, especially young, middle-class men, to insist that they were not fleeing from their traditional responsibilities but joining in the general effort to overcome obsolete and restrictive sex roles. As psychologist and men's liberation advocate Herb Goldberg argued in the 1970s, if women were tired of being sex objects for men, men were equally weary of being "success objects" for women. Besides, quite apart from the men's liberationists, the old pressures on men to "prove their masculinity" by marrying young and single-handedly supporting a family were relaxing. By the eighties, no one thought it odd if a man of thirty or so remained single, apportioning his earnings among the products advertised in such places as *Gentleman's Quarterly, Metropolitan Home,* and *Connoisseur.*

The women's magazines complained that men—meaning eligible men with attractive incomes—were suffering from "fear of commitment." Many men, however, were displaying a justifiable fear of making the wrong commitment. The young men—stereotypical yuppies, although the word had not yet been invented—who were interviewed for a 1984 article I wrote on the "new man" did not rule out marriage, but they were concerned with finding a mate who could "pull her own weight," who "would not be a burden"—as if they were selecting a companion for an upstream rafting trip. And while this is hardly scientific evidence, I have often polled college-lecture audiences, first asking the women how many of them would like to be full-time homemakers. One or two brave hands go up for this unstylish option. But when the young men are asked how many of them would be willing to support a full-time homemaker wife, the response is a few snickers, and no hands.

Women had once married men who looked as though they would be reliable breadwinners, and men had once married women who simply looked good. But now both sexes were determined to find proven wage-earners. As Harvard economics professor David Bloom told *Time* in 1986: "A pairing-off based on economics is occurring. Higher-income men and higher-income women are tending to find each other." Mimi Lieber, a New York-based marketing consultant, told me in a 1986 interview:

> We're seeing a changing pattern of marriage. It used to be that looks determined how well a woman married. But today the little dime-store girl is not being picked up by the college student. The doctor isn't marrying a nurse, he's marrying another doctor.

The frequency with which college men once married pretty dime-store clerks should probably not be exaggerated. College itself, as a social experience, helped ensure that young middle- or upper-class men would end up with young women of similar backgrounds. But marriage had provided at least a limited avenue of upward mobility for young

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women of humble origins, and that avenue was now all but closed. In the fifties, for example, an office romance meant the occasional dalliance between a boss and his secretary. Thirty years later, according to the *Wall Street Journal,* office romance was "flourishing" because "women routinely work beside men as professional and managerial peers."

Besides, a certain social opprobrium now attaches to the man who socializes with women far below him in the occupational hierarchy. Just as a professional woman who fell in love with a blue-collar male would be a subject of wonder and scorn, the executive who dallies with a pink-collar worker would be revealed today as insecure and lacking in judgment. In the 1988 movie *Working Girl,* an ambitious secretary pretends to be an upper-level executive in order to carry out a major deal. In the process she becomes romantically involved with an attractive male executive from another firm. When he finds out about her deception, she challenges him: Would you have fallen in love with me if I were just a secretary? He is abashed, because the answer, of course, is no.

It is as if, in climbing into the middle class on the strength of their own achievements, the new executive and professional women had pulled up the ladder behind them. Of course, they had not done so themselves. *Men* were choosing to marry for money, as well as for love or for looks. But upwardly mobile young women had much to gain from the tightened "pattern of marriage" within the class. Seen as economic partners as well as helpmates, women are more likely to be equals within their marriages. They are also less likely than in the past to be displaced by any of the far more numerous women—secretaries, flight attendants, cocktail waitresses—who lack professional credentials and impressive resumés.

Viewed from outside and "below," then, the professional middle class has simply become a more impregnable fortress. Once only men had had to scale its walls, devoting their youth and young adulthood to preparation and apprenticeship. Women could drift in on the strength of their charm or of so slight a credential as a bachelor's degree in French literature or art history. Today, however, almost no one gets in—male or female—without submitting to the same discipline and passing the same tests that were originally designed to exclude intruders from below.

Almost as soon as the class consolidated itself through its new androgyny, an unaccountable weariness seemed to overcome middle-class feminism. In 1963 Betty Friedan had blamed the "feminine mystique" for the "progressive demoralization" of the professional middle class—men, women, and children. The full-time housewife, she argued, had become a menace. Bored, tranquilized, suffering from "housewife's syndrome," she was not even up to the one job assigned to her—raising children, raising them to be ambitious, disciplined members of the middle class. Excluded from the "battle with the world," she had no way of transmitting the skills required for that battle. The "wasted energy" of housewives, Friedan predicted, would continue "to be destructive to their husbands, their children, and to themselves until it is used in their own battle with the world."

Two decades later, no one could complain that women were insufficiently engaged in the "battle," dazed noncombatants in the world of men. A new problem had arisen in the middle class: whether anyone would have children at all. To the individual professional woman, the problem was experienced as the inexorable ticking of the "biological clock": How would she find a husband before her fertile years ended, and find time from her career for childbearing? To conservative intellectuals, it was the problem of the "birth dearth." There was of course no shortage of population globally, or even a shortfall among Americans in general. But the birthrate among the educated, affluent, white population had fallen drastically. If there had been a question in the early sixties of whether the middle class could reproduce itself as a class, there was now a question of whether its members would reproduce at all.

At the same time, *raising* the children began to loom as a bigger challenge than ever. In the early seventies, ambitious middle-class mothers counted themselves lucky to find a day-care center or a reliable baby-sitter to mind the children while they rushed off to work. But a decade later, with mounting competition for admission to the "good" private colleges—and even to the first-rate urban nursery schools—women were thinking twice about paid child care.

The concern was expressed in various ways: "I don't want to miss the early years"; or "I don't want to leave my child with just *anyone*." But the real issue was the old middle-class dilemma of whether "anyone"—such as a Jamaican housekeeper or a Hispanic day-care worker—was equipped to instill such middle-class virtues as concentration and intellectual discipline. For many young middle-class couples the choice was stark: Have the mother work and risk retarding the child's intellectual development, or have the mother stay home, build up the child's IQ, and risk being unable to pay for a pricy

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nursery school or, later, private college. Unfortunately, feminism had not advanced to the point where these were a *father's* agonizing choices.

Attuned to the new doubts among middle-class women, Betty Friedan announced in 1981 a "second stage" for American feminism. In the first stage, she wrote, "Our aim was full participation, power and voice in the mainstream, inside the party, the political process, the professions, the business world"—in short, assimilation. But where once women had been stymied by the feminine mystique, she wrote, they were now afflicted by a "feminist mystique," which required them to be brittle, masculinized strivers. Just as she had once quoted dozens of frustrated housewives, Friedan now cited battle-weary career women, anguished over their desire to have children before their childbearing years ran out. Thus the second stage would suspend hostilities between men and women. It would "involve coming to new terms with the family" and must be launched "so we can live a new 'yes' to life and love, and can *choose* to have children."

Many feminists found Friedan's proposed truce premature. She did not claim that the struggle for equality was over, but she now saw many familiar forms of sexism as "first stage problems"—as if they required little more than a mop-up operation. For many middle-class women there was some truth to this. Problems of sheer economic injustice, of stinging discrimination, were not looming as large as the problem of when and how to start a family. But a far larger number of women remained, as always, in low-paid, stereotypically female jobs, paid far less than men in jobs requiring similar levels of skill and responsibility. For these women, Friedan's announcement that feminism had moved on to a less militant second stage was, at the very least, insensitive.

Friedan was only one sign of the new quietism of middle-class feminism. In academia, women's studies—long the most reliable reproductive organ of middle-class feminism—began in some quarters to take on a detached and esoteric air. Reviewing an important new anthology of highbrow feminist scholarship, Catherine Stimpson—herself a leading pioneer of women's studies—found the contributions strangely "eccentric in focus, uneasy in spirit." On the campuses, the mood among young career-oriented women was reportedly "postfeminist" and dominated by the conviction that, whatever indignities women had suffered in the remote past (say, 1970), the way was now open for any young woman of spirit to rise straight to the top of whatever lucrative and rewarding field she might chose.

Middle-class feminism is not, of course, all there is to American feminism. A 1986 Gallup poll found that a startling 56 percent of American women considered themselves to be "feminists," and the degree of feminist identification was if anything, slightly higher as one descended the socioeconomic scale. Black women, for example, who are economically disadvantaged relative to white women, professed to be feminists at the rate of 65 percent. But middle-class white women provide the public face of feminism; they direct and staff its major institutions. And by the late eighties, middle-class feminism seemed, even to many of its own stalwarts, to be tired: tired of defeat at the hands of the New Right over issues like the Equal Rights Amendment, but also exhausted from its own successes.

Even in the face of the new problems confronting working women, however, few are likely to trade in the "feminist mystique" for the old feminine one. For above all, the assimilation of women has almost doubled the economic resources of the middle class, helping save it from the decline experienced by the working class and lifting it, in fact, well out of the middle range of income. The $60,000-plus a year that a professional couple can expect to earn by pooling their incomes puts them financially well ahead of over 80 percent of American families. By assimilating women, what we have called the middle class became, in strictly economic terms, the upper middle class. □

Philip Kasinitz

A Private Times Square?

The rags of the squalid ballad singer fluttered in the rich light that showed the goldsmith's treasures, pale and pinched up faces hovered above the windows where was tempting food, hungry eyes wandered over the profusion guarded by one thin sheet of brittle glass—an iron wall to them; half naked and shivering figures stopped to gaze at Chinese shawls and golden stuffs of India.

Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*

We live, my more literary minded friends tell me, in an age when irony is highly valued. So I suppose I should not be surprised that the continuing overbuilding of midtown Manhattan has taken a distinctly ironic twist. Still, there is something downright unsettling about the latest chapter in the ongoing assault on the theater district: the plan to

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build a suburban style shopping mall based on a "Times Square" theme—on the real Times Square!

This plan was announced on February 23, 1989, by the developers of "One Broadway Place," the oxymoronically named skyscraper now under construction on the site of the old Loew's State Theater at Broadway and 45th Street. The six-level mall, to be housed in an atrium at the building's base, will feature a ninety- by one hundred-twenty-foot semicircular wall of Times Square–like neon signs designed at considerable expense by the special-effects firm of Associates and Ferren, whose credits include the films "Altered States" and "Little Shop of Horrors." In a marvelously semiotic touch, 360 video screens and an enormous sound system will present (signify?) visual and aural images of street excitement: an idealized version of what actually exists a few hundred feet away. The mall will also be enclosed behind an enormous glass wall, so that the real Times Square can serve as a backdrop to the one recreated inside. It is scheduled to open in the summer of 1990.

In a theater district increasingly bereft of theater, the fact that real estate developers have hired a theatrical special-effects designer to create their "Times Square" motif is not completely unexpected. And the fact that the mall will occupy the bottom of yet another skyscraping office building only makes the irony complete: a theater set invoking the dense street life of the past in a building designed to insulate people from the less savory street life of the present. "One Broadway Place" is truly a building for our times.

Yet I do get a little worried when it appears that the designers are confusing their stage set with reality. According to the *New York Times* of February 24, 1989, Jon A. Jerde of the Jerde Partnership, the architects of One Broadway Place, claims that the building will "do a distillate of Times Square" while at the same time guaranteeing "safety." What does safety mean in this context? Physical safety, certainly; any great public space must provide that. Yet Jerde's plan will also provide the psychological safety of a predictable, risk-fee consumer environment. Its sixty restaurants and stores will undoubtedly provide a cornucopia of goods, but there will be little to distinguish the types of establishments from those in other "classy" malls. Carefully screened out will be the tawdry, raucous, and yes, sometimes dangerous hoopla that this part of town has been known for during more than half a century. In short, One Broadway Place seeks to ape the appearance while denying the spirit of Times Square.

The developers also brag that the mall will be "entirely private," unlike other recently built New York atriums: not one of its 140,000 square feet will officially be public space. This legal distinction, the *Times* notes, will allow the operators to exercise control over "how, when and by whom the mall is used," a polite way of saying that they will be able to keep out the homeless, the hustlers, and other sundry Times Square denizens. They will be visible, of course, but on the other side of the glass wall. Thus, even at the "crossroads of the world," their paths need never cross those of the tourists who will be the mall's primary customers.

This is, no doubt, a sound business decision. It is also an amazing contradiction. A "private" Times Square? The excitement of public spaces derives from their being *public*. Everyone, including the riffraff (perhaps especially the riffraff), is welcome. Contact with the new, the different, and the bizarre is what creates the atmosphere that the stage set in One Broadway Place will attempt to evoke with lights, sounds, and video screens. Perhaps, in a city increasingly divided and mean-spirited, that sort of street life does not work as well in reality. But you can't have it both ways. The retreat from the cosmopolitan ideal of great public spaces has already cost New York much of what makes it unique. This is the tragedy that the developers of One Broadway Place seek to render as farce.

It is true that the Times Square that exists today is often unsafe, or at least unpleasant. The social ruptures that have made it so—poverty, homelessness, crack—were not primarily caused by developers and architects, although both certainly played a part. Nor can they be solved by urban design alone, although more humane notions of urban design can indeed play an important role in their solution. All in all I suppose we can't really blame the developers of One Broadway Place for using a wall of glass to keep harsh reality at bay. Yet their voyeuristic solution (you can look, but you can't touch!) seems a cruel rejoinder to the city. It rubs our noses in one of its saddest civic failures. □

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Hal Langfur

The Two Forks Debate: Water in the West

A pool is, for many of us in the West, a symbol not of affluence but of order, of control over the uncontrollable. A pool is water, made available and useful, and is, as such, infinitely soothing to the western eye.

—Joan Didion, *The White Album*

Read reservoir for pool and one of the West's great environmental controversies begins to unsnarl. Read Two Forks Reservoir, a canyon-sized pool that Denver developers want to impound behind a giant dam on the South Platte River, a pool five times bigger than any other standing body of water in Colorado. Read, too, control over Denver's economy, control over state politics, control over a precious resource that otherwise would be lost to faraway places like Phoenix, Tucson, and Los Angeles.

Control is the recompense dam proponents seek for the $37 million they already have spent without yet pouring a cubic yard of concrete and for the onus of soliciting $1 billion from city residents to build the dam if its construction is ever approved. Currently in the hands of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which in January announced its intention to grant a construction permit, the Two Forks project would plug the South Platte with one of the biggest dams ever erected without federal funds. Studied and debated for the better part of a decade, the project has forced state residents to weigh the value of preserving a scenic river canyon against the need for water for future urban development. But those who reduce the issue to dollars, drinking water, or endangered species miss its broader significance. The unprecedented level of public concern over the project suggests the debate has as much to do with clashing visions of the West as with water's supply and demand.

"The West begins," wrote Bernard DeVoto, "where the average annual rainfall drops below twenty inches." Geographically, this translates to the one hundredth meridian, the line of west longitude that stretches from Carrizo Springs, Texas, to Dunseith, North Dakota and beyond, which few crops can survive without constant irrigation. The inhabited West ends, with few exceptions, where hydraulic engineers have been unable to divert or trap enough water to irrigate farmland and quench settlers' thirsts. In other words, aridity defines the West; a seasonal abundance or deficiency of moisture, like last summer's drought, merely eases or exacerbates a water shortage that is generalized and unrelenting.

So it is not without reason that the western mind places a premium on water and begins to come unhinged when its supply seems threatened. Many minds have come unhinged in the debate over who will control Colorado's water. When environmentalists say they want to stop the Two Forks project because it will threaten the existence of a tiny butterfly or because it will submerge certain backcountry trails, urban developers blink in disbelief.

Ever since the Forty-Niners learned to divert streams into sluice boxes in the Sierra foothills, water has meant wealth in the West. Ever since the Mormons became the country's first commercially successful irrigators, establishing a man-made oasis at the barren foot of Utah's Wasatch Mountains, water has been central to the gospel of western expansion. The same gospel informs the exhortations of those who defend the Two Forks project. With a rousing call for western pride and progress, they invoke a modern-day version of Manifest Destiny. Bill Hornby, senior editor of the *Denver Post*, has labeled opponents of the dam the dupes of "a myth of the West that holds the region to be predominantly a preservable paradise of wide open spaces and natural beauties." A report by Denver's Independence Institute, a conservative think tank, asserts that the project would allow the city to "set a course for the stars in economic growth and individual opportunity."

The sheer size of the project has fueled such rhetoric. So has the fact that its construction would mean a lot to the contractors and unions whose workers it would employ, to the home builders whose developments it would supply with water, to the politicians whose careers depend on concrete signs of economic development. The dam would be a concrete sign 615 feet high and 1,700 feet wide. Inundating thirty miles of the South Platte's Cheesman Canyon, it would create a reservoir whose surface area would be half the size of Manhattan.

The South Platte itself does not carry nearly enough water to fill such a basin. Most of the water would be diverted from the far side of the Continental Divide, or Western Slope, where high peaks scrape 80 percent of the state's snow and rain from the sky before it reaches the eastern watersheds. Each year during the spring thaw, tributaries of the westward flowing Colorado River swell with what local water engineers like to call "excess flow." By that they mean water not already committed to states, cities, farmers, and other users downstream. This water would be pumped east through a subterranean tunnel more than twenty miles in length,

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under peaks ranging up to 13,000 feet. From the tunnel's mouth the torrent would descend a tributary of the South Platte and Two Forks Dam would block its flow twenty-five miles southwest of Denver. The resulting reservoir would hold 1.1 million acre-feet of water, or about 355 billion gallons.

As herculean as the scheme may seem, a giant water diversion and storage system that pierces the ranges of Continental Divide, captures the small amount of unclaimed water still remaining on the Western Slope and reverses its natural flow to supply the water taps of a distant city is only a logical step in the century-long struggle to make the West habitable—and profitable—on a large scale. This ambition has produced bigger dams, such as Hoover Dam and Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River, and transported water greater distances, as in the California Aqueduct. The Two Forks project would provide water for Denver's expansion, just as similar water projects sustain every major city in the West.

Hence, the issue of size and complexity alone leaves much of the controversy unexplained. Specifically, it does not explain why each side has accused the other of trying to spoil Colorado's future; or why national environmental organizations consider the project threatening enough to have sent some of their best lawyers, scientists, and lobbyists to fight it; or why the state's traditionally conservative rural residents have teamed up with its environmental activists.

Some of the answers lie in the history of urban development and water use in Colorado. More than a century ago, Denver's thirst outgrew the supply of water naturally flowing past the city; more than fifty years ago, city engineers began diverting water from the Western Slope. By the mid-1970s, about half of the water used on the Front Range—the densely populated corridor running along the eastern edge of the Rockies—came from western Colorado. Now, with half the state's inhabitants living in and around Denver, city planners forecast water shortages within a decade unless Two Forks is built. In the suburbs, which rely on the core city for much of their water, officials are particularly adamant. These communities, they say, will be short of water by 1990.

Unfortunately for dam proponents, the years of exploiting Western Slope water have bred resentment. People who live in the mountainous two-thirds of the state are no longer as willing to drain their rivers for city dwellers. So much water is heading east already that they fear Two Forks may be the project that finally places their own housing developments, farms, and industries in jeopardy. They argue that the preoccupation with Denver's development ignores the state's shift in recent years to an economy increasingly based on tourism and recreation, and that the strain Two Forks will place on mountain resources could threaten the skiing, camping, kayaking, rafting, and fishing that attract nearly two-hundred-thousand visitors to Colorado each year.

The project's direct environmental damage would be most devastating in, but by no means limited to, the stretch of Cheesman Canyon to be flooded. Environmentalists say the canyon comprises an irreplaceable habitat for elk, beaver, mule deer, bald eagle, bighorn sheep, and the endangered Pawnee montane skipper butterfly. Hundreds of miles downstream in Nebraska, reduced flows in the South Platte would damage wetlands essential to endangered whooping cranes and other waterfowl. In western Colorado, reduced flows in the Blue, Frazer, and Colorado rivers would threaten several endangered fish species. Water developers could not have contrived a more damaging project.

The significance of the Two Forks project, however, transcends the immediate environmental concerns. What makes the project so critical to supporters and critics alike is Colorado's position, actual and symbolic, at the headwaters of the entire West. Four major rivers begin in Colorado's Rocky Mountains: the South Platte, the Arkansas, the Rio Grande, and the Colorado. From the Mississippi to the Pacific, their waters power industries, irrigate farmland, and keep Kentucky bluegrass green. They also etch the West with twisting lines of political import. What happens in Colorado, both in terms of water usage and water law, affects millions of people living downstream in hundreds of cities and towns throughout the West. That explains why more than half the country's water lawyers live in Colorado; it also explains why some of the nation's most powerful environmental organizations—the National Wildlife Federation, the Environmental Defense Fund, the National Audubon Society—have pledged to tie up the project in court if the Corps of Engineers grants a construction permit.

Every recent public opinion poll on the subject has tallied significantly more Coloradans opposing Two Forks than supporting it, even in Denver itself, which will reap the benefits. But in a debate dominated by lawyers and politicians, public opinion goes only so far. "The political pressures are ninety-five to five in favor of Two Forks," says Charles Wilkinson, a University of Colorado law professor specializing in western resource law. "Over time we have built up an establishment with extraordinary vested personal interests in more water development. This establishment consists of real estate developers, water lawyers, water engineers, and sprawling administrative systems that directly

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provide thousands of jobs. There is no other vested interest group in the American West dealing with natural resources as powerful as this one."

The overriding message of the Two Forks debate is that the "water establishment" is fast losing the public's support. Those opposing the project have challenged what the environmental writer Ed Marston calls "the primacy of water development as the concept around which the West is organized."

As new sources of water become increasingly hard to find, the traditional, giant water storage and diversion projects will seem less appealing than ever. Hydraulic engineers already have diverted and dammed most of the West's "easy water"; the feats of engineering required to exploit the remaining, less accessible sources will make future dams prohibitively expensive and far more damaging to the environment. By proceeding recklessly, Westerners may destroy some of the very things that are most appealing about the region: the moderate size of the cities, the proximity to natural beauty, the recreational opportunities provided by open spaces and free-flowing rivers.

Colorado's opposition to the Two Forks project points to the emergence of a different ethic, a reaction against the unchecked environmental exploitation that has ruled the region since the gold rush. The change suggests that Westerners, at least some of them, have begun to abandon a century-old imperative to subdue the land, that a wild river may now be more soothing to the western eye than Didion's filtered pool. □

Albert O. Hirschman

Opinionated Opinions and Democracy

I wish to inquire into an ancient theme, that of the microfoundation of a democratic society, the exemplary constitution of the democratic, rather than of Adorno's authoritarian, personality. I realize that the formation of that sort of personality is like happiness in that it normally eludes a direct quest. But presumably it is not harmful, and may in special circumstances be useful, to have some idea about the human type one would wish to foster in a democracy.

I start with a recollection from childhood or early adolescence. It goes back to Berlin, the city where I spent the first eighteen years of my life, from 1915 to 1933, when I left for Paris. I must have been perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, so it took place sometime in the late twenties. Although those were relatively tranquil days and I was not yet politicized I began in those years to ask myself various philosophical and semireligious questions. At the time, my relations with my father were good and trusting and those with my older sister were then becoming very close as they would remain for many years. My father (a surgeon), had a questioning and skeptical mind, but lacked the defense of irony so that I recall him as a bit melancholy and occasionally even perplexed. One day we had a conversation where I must have asked him questions to which he frankly avowed not having the answers. I cannot remember at all the nature of my questions, but distinctly recall running from that conversation to the other end of our apartment to exclaim to my sister: "*Weisst Du was? Vati hat keine Weltanschauung!*" (You know what? Daddy doesn't have a *Weltanschauung*!)

Why do I remember this not particularly brilliant utterance so well? Is it because, perhaps for the first time, I felt I would do better than my father: I surely would not be caught lacking a *Weltanschauung* by the time *I* was a grownup! Or is it rather because the moment I said it I felt that it was *my* indignation and my outburst that were foolish—after all, we remember best those mortifying moments in which we blunder, stumble, or make ourselves otherwise ridiculous. Finally, it is possible that I remember this moment—including its spatial attributes—so clearly because it encapsulates and portends a question that was to remain with me for the rest of my life—to the point where I am just now, some sixty years later, ready to venture some thoughts on how desirable it is to be equipped with a complete set of firm ideas, beliefs, or opinions.

To open up this problem, I shall use the device of comparing "opinions" to other valued possessions of the individual, such as ordinary consumer goods. The purpose is not to declare that opinions are "just like," say, durables, but to bring out some characteristic differences.

Is it a good thing to have opinions? In his short story "The Darling," Chekhov answers this question very much in the positive:

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> And what was worst of all, [Olenka] no longer had any opinions whatever. She saw the objects about her and understood what was going on, but she could not form an opinion about anything and did not know what to talk about. *And how awful it is not to have any opinions!* You see, for instance, a bottle, or the rain, or a peasant driving in his cart, but what the bottle is for, or the rain, or the peasant, and what is the meaning of it, you can't say, and could not even for a thousand rubles. When she had Kukin, or Pustovalov or, later, the veterinary surgeon, Olenka could explain it all and give her opinions about anything you like, but now there was the same emptiness in her head and in her heart as in her yard outside. She was filled with dread and bitterness [my emphasis].

Here Chekhov seems to be saying that not to have any opinions is tantamount to not having individuality, personhood, identity, character, self. And she who has no self can hardly have any self-respect.

Not to have opinions is thus symptomatic of a basic lack and of a desperate predicament. It is, in fact, the opposite condition that has been widely commended by social scientists, psychologists, and philosophers: to have opinions very much of one's own. Wilhelm von Humboldt went perhaps farthest in this direction when he proclaimed individuality (*Eigentümlichkeit*) and originality (*Originalität*) as "that on which all the greatness of man rests in the last instance and after which he must ceaselessly strive." Humboldt's views strongly influenced John Stuart Mill, who cited and explicated them at length in the third chapter of his essay *On Liberty* (1859). This chapter had the demonstrative heading "Of Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-Being." Closer to our time, Erik Erikson stressed the struggle to achieve identity as a crucial formative life experience; and John Rawls, in his *Theory of Justice*, included self-respect (presumably based on identity, character, and "opinions") among the "primary goods" that a well-ordered society must supply to its citizens.

At first blush, it seems that, like other aspects of the quality of life, such as clean air, "opinions" can be treated like consumer goods: the more the better as well as, in this case, the stronger the better. Not only social thought, but much of Western culture has endorsed this position and has celebrated the value of exhibiting strong opinions and of taking a principled stand, to the point where there is even some doubt whether the economic principle of decreasing returns applies to the good under examination. Correspondingly, indifference and lack of conviction have been denounced in the harshest terms, as illustrated by Dante and his scathing portrayal of the angels who would not take sides in the battle between God and the devil, and of the lukewarm in general. In a powerful passage he singled out these wretches as deprived of "the hope of death" and relegated them to the vestibule of Hell for the reason that, if they were let in, the damned would have someone to look down on.

A few centuries later, much the same value judgment found another famous poetic expression:

> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

Yeats explains here how it is that, as he says earlier in "The Second Coming," "things fall apart." To him it is apparent that a well-ordered society requires the inverse arrangement: the best, not the worst, should be full of passionate intensity, that is, of sharply articulated and firmly held opinions.

In short, vacillation, indifference, or weakly held opinions have long met with contempt, while approval and admiration have been bestowed on firmness, fullness, and articulateness of opinion.

Yet matters are hardly that simple. Chekhov's story itself intimates that to have a lot of ready-made opinions can be as ridiculous as not to have any opinions is "bitter." For all his Olenka does in her happier moments is to parrot, each time with considerable conviction and aplomb, the opinions of her successive husbands and lovers. When Anthony Downs wrote his *Economic Theory of Democracy*, he thought it was one of the advantages of political parties to offer citizens a full range of ready-made and firm opinions on all the issues of the day. In the meantime, however, we have come to appreciate that this "time-saving" feature of political parties, particularly of those with an ideological bent (those that in Germany were called *Weltanschauungsparteien*) and the ensuing "free ride" to a full set of strong opinions, comes at a considerable cost. We express our doubts about the value of the Downs mechanism by designating those who take advantage of it as "knee-jerk liberals," or "knee-jerk conservatives." Perhaps, to paraphrase a famous Chicago theorem, there ain't no such thing as a free *ride*!

Introducing the knee-jerk concept complicates the appraisal of the benefits that flow from having opinions. Apparently it can be just as much a denial of individuality, personhood, and self—a sort of "escape from freedom"—to be outfitted with a full set of strong opinions on all the issues of the day as to suffer the "awful" (Chekhov) condition of not having any opinions whatever. Although the goods we buy in the market are unambiguously conducive to material welfare, opinions are not necessarily the key to individuality and self-respect; it all seems to depend on some further, complex specifications regarding the more or less "autonomous" manner in which the opinions have been formed.

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Some progress can perhaps be made with our topic if it is viewed from a collective rather than from an individual angle. Thus far I have been inquiring into the contribution to *individual* satisfaction and happiness that is made by the acquisition and possession of a set of many-sided and strongly formulated opinions. But surely such possession, widely diffused among the citizenry, also has important effects, positive and negative, on the character of society. An important influence on the quality of life of individual citizens could then be exerted in this indirect way. The desirability of economic progress has often been evaluated in this dual fashion: One looks not only at the impact of, say, economic growth on individual well-being, but also on its contribution to the maintenance and strengthening of a free democratic society. Ecology aside, the consensus has lately been that the social and political effects of economic growth are as beneficent as its direct effect on the individual's welfare. But such harmony between the direct and indirect, or individual and social, effects was not always taken for granted. Up to the eighteenth century, for example, political economists and philosophers frequently worried about the corrupting effect on the state of increases in wealth. In the end, the state's ruin would affect its citizens adversely, however much they may have prospered for a time.

Old-fashioned as it may seem, this sort of reasoning may well be worth refurbishing in conjunction with the problem at hand. Recent contributions to the theory of democracy have stressed the role of deliberation in the democratic process. For a democracy to function well and to endure, it is essential, so it has been argued, that opinions *not* be fully formed *in advance* of the process of deliberation. The participants in this process—both the public at large and its representatives—should maintain a degree of openness or tentativeness in their opinions and be ready to modify them both as a result of the arguments put forward by the contending parties and, more simply, in the light of new information that could be developed in the course of public debates. Without a political process that manifests at least some aspiration toward this admittedly somewhat idyllic picture, democracy loses its legitimacy and will thus be endangered.

If this view has merit then the traditional strong emphasis of Western culture on the virtue of strong opinions turns out to be curiously wrongheaded. The suspicion arises that this emphasis is rooted in a long aristocratic tradition and has not been suitably modified by the subsequent, still rather young democratic age. As is well known, ideological relics of this sort have considerable potential for mischief. Social scientists and psychologists who hold forth so volubly on the virtues of individuality, personality, and identity might therefore do well to explore how to combine these desiderata with such democratic qualities as intellectual openness, flexibility, and readiness to appreciate a new argument, perhaps even pleasure in embracing it.

Let me try to put the matter in the economist's language. Given the "basic need" for identity in our culture, the forming and acquiring of *opinions* yields considerable utility to the individual. At the same time, if carried beyond some point, the process has dangerous side effects—it is hazardous for the functioning and stability of the democratic order. Under present cultural values these noxious side effects do not enter the individual calculus—they are what economists call external diseconomies. Hence there will be an *overproduction* of opinionated opinion. The most straightforward way of avoiding this overproduction would be for individuals to change the value system under which they operate. Might they learn to value both having opinions and keeping an open mind, to mix the delights of winning an argument with the pleasures of being good listeners?

In conclusion I return to the earlier argument that evaluated the utility of having opinions from the individual, rather than collective, point of view. There I suggested that holding many strong opinions is an ambiguous indicator of well-being: It may or may not lastingly fulfill the promise of endowing the holders with true identity and rich personality. I also showed that the possession of opinions will be the less effective in those respects, for the more the opinions are acquired through the wholesale embrace of an "ideology," the more pronounced is their "kneejerk" character. Now one way of acquiring opinions in the opposite, personality enriching manner is to give them definite shape only after they have passed through intense confrontation with other views, that is, through the process of democratic deliberation. It turns out, therefore, that the public interest in democratic decision making converges nicely with the private interest in forming opinions in such a manner as to enhance one's self-respect.□

This article is based on a presentation given at the Free University of Berlin in December 1988, when the university awarded the author an honorary degree. A portion of the paper appeared in the May 1989 issue of *American Economic Review*.

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Jerusalem: Memorial to Holocaust Victims Les Stone/IMPACT VISUALS

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Christopher R. Browning

THE HOLOCAUST DISTORTED

WHY DID THE HEAVENS NOT DARKEN? THE "FINAL SOLUTION" IN HISTORY, by Arno Mayer. New York: Pantheon Books, 1989. 492 pp. $27.95.

The subtitle of Professor Arno Mayer's *Why Did The Heavens Not Darken?* is *The "Final Solution" in History*. Therein lies the major source of confusion and controversy in the book. Mayer does indeed attempt to set the "Judeocide" (a term he prefers to Holocaust) within various comparative frameworks, as the subtitle promises. But as the book progresses, the real thrust of Mayer's argument becomes apparent. He is not so much placing the "Final Solution" in a wider historical context as he is redefining it. Ultimately, Mayer does not believe there was a Final Solution, if one understands that Nazi euphemism to mean a conscious Nazi policy aimed at the systematic extermination of every last Jew in Europe. Instead Mayer sees the mass murder of European Jewry as a byproduct of Nazi Germany's anticommunist crusade on the one hand and its hyperexploitation of impressed labor on the other. Moreover, Germany's generals and industrialists share equal standing with Hitler and the Nazis as the perpetrators of this mass murder. This depiction of Nazi Jewish policy is, in my opinion, quite mistaken.

Mayer rejects the notion that the "Judeocide" was a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon, characterized by "modern technology" and a "bureaucracy of violence." These elements facilitated the "Judeocide" but they were not its "mainspring." Mayer seeks the "driving force" behind the "Judeocide" in two earlier historical parallels. The first is the Crusades, in which an ideologically driven "holy war" resulted in the massacres of Jews and Moslems. The second is the Thirty Years War of 1618–1648, a "total war" and "general crisis" of European society that involved enormous civilian casualties. For Mayer the second thirty years war of 1914–45 was a fusion of these elements—"ideological crusade" and "total" war. This fusion created "an enormous historical convulsion in which the Jews were the foremost but by no means the only victims."

How and why did the Jews become the most prominent victims of this second thirty years war? In his previous books Mayer has portrayed modern European history as a struggle between revolution and counterrevolution, between the forces of movement and the forces of order. Mayer sees European Jewry as caught in the middle of this conflict. In Western Europe the French and Industrial Revolutions brought emancipation and prosperity to the Jews. In Russia the Bolshevik Revolution opened the way to their more nearly equal participation in society. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Jews embraced liberalism and capitalism in the West and supported the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. In the East European "rimland," however, the old order persisted, and the demographic center of European Jewry lay in countries characterized by hypernationalism, virulent anti-Semitism, and active illiberalism. A mass of unassimilated *Ostjuden*, strangers in their own lands, thus lived within a hostile political environment in the most "imperiled geopolitical zone" in Europe.

If Eastern Europe was fated to become the killing fields of the "Judeocide" and its dense population of unassimilated Jews the most numerous victims, the "epicenter" of the European "disequilibrium" was Germany. In what Mayer calls the "classic country of unsimultaneity," modern and traditional elements combined in an unreconciled and explosive mixture. Despite Germany's economic modernization, the old elites strove to maintain their domination. In desperation they turned to Hitler and his lower-middle-class supporters "to restabilize their endangered positions." One leitmotif of Mayer's book is the responsibility he heaps upon the old elites for the Nazi dictatorship, the war, and the "Judeocide." These sweeping condemnations, at least partially justified but usually devoid of the nuance and qualification that would shed more light than heat, reach their untenable extreme when Mayer writes,

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"In 1932–33 a self-appointed oligarchy of traditional conservatives and reactionaries had prevailed on Hitler to assume power."

Hitler's ability to forge an alliance between the antimodernist fears of the lower middle class and old elites derived from a "syncretic ideology" composed of anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, the geopolitics of eastern expansionism (*Lebensraum*), and anti-Marxism, all appropriated from the ideological arsenal of conservatism. Quite rightly Mayer emphasizes that for Hitler the Jew appeared in many different guises—"the antithesis of the German Aryan, the purveyor of modernity, the prime mover of parasitic capitalism, the agent of Marxist subversion, and the master of Bolshevik Russia"—and was thus the ideal "single enemy" to symbolize all the demons of his "syncretic ideology." But according to Mayer antimodernism was the key motive not only for the old elites and the lower middle class but for Hitler himself. "If Hitler's worldview had an epicenter, it was his deep-seated animosity toward contemporary civilization, and not his hatred for Jews, which was grafted onto it."

If Mayer captures the functional utility of Hitler's ideology, above all its capacity to offer something to almost everyone, in my opinion he misses its wellspring. Hitler's anticommunism and antimodernism were partial and qualified. He regarded Stalin as a great historical figure. He admired his ruthlessness and iron will, which were remaking Russia. He envied Stalin's ability, for instance, to murder the bulk of his officer corps. It was not the totalitarian terror of Stalinism but rather the emancipatory, egalitarian, and internationalist—that is the Jewish—aspects of Marxism that Hitler abhorred. Likewise, Hitler loved the gadgets of modern technology, from fast cars to V-2 rockets (might one add gas chambers?). It was the concomitant social change of the modernization process, again symbolized above all by Jewish emancipation, that he hated. In contrast, Hitler's racial anti-Semitism was total, implacable, and uncompromising.

Mayer's tendency to downplay the importance of Hitler and his anti-Semitism on the one hand and to emphasize antimodernism, anticommunism, and the role of the old elites on the other culminates in his interpretation of the relationship between the German attack on Soviet Russia—"Barbarossa"—and the Final Solution. Many historians have noted the close connection between Barbarossa and the Holocaust, but Mayer goes beyond this in arguing that the latter was "grafted" (this seems to be Mayer's favorite metaphor) onto the former. For Mayer "Nazi Germany's assault on Soviet Russia was *sui generis*"—an absolute or total war to conquer *Lebensraum* in the east but also a crusade to extirpate "Judeobolshevism."

Hitler, the SS, and the generals shared an "ideological-programmatic consensus" about this war of conquest and destruction, but it was not yet characterized by any fixed notion of killing all the Russian Jews. In the first four or five weeks of Barbarossa, Mayer argues, the Jews were subjected to "spontaneous" and "unpremeditated" pogroms by the vigilantes of the anti-Semitic and anticommunist "rimland" populations but not to systematic massacre. While the Germans eliminated Jewish communist functionaries like any other party cadres, they ghettoized the bulk of the surviving Jews, "apparently without any thought of exterminating them after victory. . . ." Instead, the Jews of Russia and the rest of Europe were to be resettled over the Volga or beyond the Urals. With the miscarriage of Barbarossa, particularly the delayed capture of Kiev in late September, the invading Germans—both army and SS—began "venting their rage" on the Jews out of fear of possible defeat. The starting point was the great massacre of nearly 34,000 Jews at Babi Yar outside Kiev on September 29–30. Thereafter, the more frustrated the Germans became, the more the "crusade within the war" intensified at the expense of the Jews.

As for the place of the Holocaust in history, therefore, it was not a decisive step in the creation of Hitler's New Order, but the most fatal convulsion of the Nazi Behemoth's death throes. With the courage of his convictions, Mayer does not shrink from the logical, albeit dubious, implications of his interpretation, namely that

> had the blitzkrieg succeeded in the east . . . Europe might ironically have been spared the worst horrors [and] the Jews, instead of being massacred, probably would have been deported. . . . Victory would have kept open the historical possibility of a significant remnant of Jews enduring. . . . In fact, the faster and easier the victory, the larger this remnant and the better the chances for contingent survival would doubtless have been.

Mayer must ignore considerable evidence to sustain his view that the "derailment" of Barbarossa unleashed the "Judeocide" only in the fall of 1941. For instance, the advancing *Einsatzgruppen* almost immediately took control of the local anticommunist units, whose pogroms they had encouraged and incited. The initial pogroms—so emphasized by Mayer—constituted only a minute fraction of the killing subsequently carried out by these units under direct German supervision. The pace of systematic killing rapidly accelerated after mid-July 1941, when

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Himmler committed two SS brigades (over 13,000 men) to operate behind the fast-advancing and overburdened *Einsatzgruppen* force of three thousand men. In the month of August alone one of these brigades reported a body count of 44,000! In the first two weeks of August, Himmler toured the eastern front, encouraging his men in their onslaught against the Jews.

When confronted in mid-August with the complaints about the terrible psychological cost to his men of killing women and children, Himmler ordered his crime lab scientists to experiment with killing methods that would be "more humane" for his executioners. These experiments led directly to the gas vans, which went into use in the death camp at Chelmno in early December. Without waiting for such technological advances, *Einsatzgruppe A* reported a body count of 85,000 by September 19. Mass executions did not therefore begin only with Babi Yar. The evidence could be multiplied but the point is already clear: The notion of a systematic German assault on Russian Jewry dating only from the end of September and deriving from the frustration of defeat is simply fanciful. The vast intensification of the murder campaign against Russian Jewry dates from mid-July, at the height of victory euphoria.

If the mass murder of Russian Jewry is in Mayer's view "grafted" onto the spiraling brutality of the anti-Bolshevik crusade, the extension of the mass murder to the rest of European Jewry is seen within the context of the economic imperatives of total war, with the intensifying persecution of the Jews "calibrated in accordance with the productivity-utility precept." Following the "maddening winter of 1941–2," Mayer argues, the "deliberate mass murder of the Jews was set in motion" by a "program of extermination through forced labor." In Auschwitz and Majdanek, which contained both labor and death camps, there was a "conjuncture and inseparability between labor exploitation and extermination." Jews "were deported there as part of a vast impressment of all Europe for the benefit of Nazi Germany's overstrained war machine."

Because of his determination to emphasize the priority of labor over gassing, Mayer's logic and prose become increasingly tortured. He concedes the fact that—unlike non-Jews—Jewish women, children, and elderly were also sent to Auschwitz along with Jewish workers. This fact meant that the nonworkers were doomed to die in the terrible conditions there in any case. Thus "selection upon or after arrival was merely the logical consequence and implementation of this prior warrant for destruction. This is not the same as saying the 'preselected' Jews and Gypsies were sent to Auschwitz, especially Birkenau, to be gassed." Gassing developed only gradually and "may be said to have intensified the torment of the camp's Jews in degree, not in kind."

Mayer does not stop with this specious scholasticism but pushes his point even further. Certainly in Auschwitz and probably for all of Europe as well, he claims, more Jews died of "so-called 'natural' causes" (exhaustion, malnutrition, disease, exposure) than "unnatural" causes (gassing, shooting, injection). This extraordinary allegation, it must be said, finds no support whatsoever in any documents or historical studies that I have seen, and Mayer's book—without footnotes—provides no evidence for it.

Because the death camps of Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka had "none of the ambiguities" of Auschwitz and Majdanek and "had no function other than the mass murder of totally unarmed and helpless civilians," Mayer finds them "much more difficult to fit into historical focus." In fact for Mayer they admittedly "defy explanation." However, Mayer does not ask himself what the implications of this candid admission are for the adequacy of his interpretive framework.

Once again Mayer must ignore considerable evidence to sustain the notion that the gassing of Jews in the death camps emerged only after the winter of 1941–2 as a kind of afterthought to the "hyperexploitation" of labor. Nowhere in Mayer's book do we learn that within two to three months of the invasion of Russia, Heydrich informed Eichmann of Hitler's decision for the physical extermination of all European Jewry. Nowhere in Mayer do we learn that Nazi "Jewish experts" traveling back from meetings in Berlin in October could casually inform their friends that "in the near future many of the Jewish vermin will be exterminated through special measures." Nowhere in Mayer do we learn of the Berlin reply on December 18, 1941, to an inquiry about whether all Jews should be liquidated regardless of age, sex, and economic interest: "In the meantime clarity on the Jewish question has been achieved through oral discussion: economic interests are to be disregarded in principle in the settlement of this problem."

Not only did the middle-echelon officials know of the looming Final Solution in the fall of 1941, but concrete preparations were already underway. In October, during the great Nazi encirclement victory of Vyasma and Bryansk (and not during November as Mayer alleges), Herbert Lange toured the Warthegau looking for a proper site for the Chelmno death camp. In the same month SS officers arrived in Belzec, where camp construction began on

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November 1. The death camp was a totally unprecedented invention. If the death-camp solution had been approved and was being implemented in October, the problem must have been posed by Himmler and Heydrich to their SS planners much earlier. Himmler and Heydrich in turn must have been first incited to their task by Hitler earlier yet. We are once again led back to mid-summer 1941 and the height of German victory for the genesis of the Final Solution. The mass murder of the European Jews was the first use to which German victory was going to be put; it was not the byproduct of desperate labor impressment to stave off defeat.

Mayer's attempt to correlate the Final Solution to Germany's sagging military fortunes works no better for the later years. Himmler's savage determination to kill all the Jews as fast as possible, and his impatience with a short stay of execution even for desperately scarce Jewish skilled workers, is well documented. Mayer sees such documents merely as evidence that Himmler was becoming "more and more incoherent"! In fact Himmler was rapidly approaching his goal. By December 1942, one month before the debacle at Stalingrad and a full half-year before the Germans permanently lost the initiative at Kursk, over 75 percent of all Holocaust victims were already dead. German defeat and Jewish death did not follow the same trajectory.

In the end one must return to Mayer's admission that the camps at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka "defy explanation." One must be frank: They defy *his* explanation, and they do so because he refuses to understand the Final Solution for what it was—the Nazis' plan to kill every last Jew in Europe on whom they could lay their hands. For Mayer Jews were killed because they were identified with Bolshevism, because they were expendable labor, because they were easier prey than elusive partisan bands, because the camp and ghetto conditions were terrible, because the Germans were increasingly enraged over their impending defeat, and so on. They were killed, according to Mayer, for every conceivable reason but the most simple and obvious: They were killed because they were Jews.

Mayer's intention to set the Holocaust in a wider historical context and to explore its "linkages" to other Nazi concerns and obsessions is perfectly valid. Much of the best recent work in Holocaust studies, though not on the sweeping and ambitious scale attempted by Mayer, has been precisely along these lines. Mayer's desire to examine the correlation between Nazi Jewish policy and the course of the war is a promising approach if done accurately. His emphasis on anti-Bolshevism as the most crucial element for the old elites' participation in the genocide is sound. Mayer is also quite right to remind us that the anti-Semitism of Hitler and the leading Nazis was only part of the equation and that one must take into account the enabling and facilitating factors of the "Judeocide."

If Mayer's beginning conception and many of his insights are laudable, how did he go so wrong? I would suggest the following. In his discussion of Hitler's syncretic ideology, anti-Semitism is conceded and expansionism and anti-Marxism are explored, but the basic racist underpinnings of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*—his understanding of history as a struggle of races in which the Jews played the most nefarious role—is given short shrift. Although Mayer subsequently explores the "linkages" between Nazi Jewish policy, anti-Bolshevism, and total war, he ignores another key linkage—that between Nazi Jewish policy and Hitler's war aims, namely his schemes for a total reordering of Europe along racial lines.

Between 1939 and 1941, when Hitler was allied with Stalin and every war was a success, Hitler's demographic engineers were already preparing for a massive population shuffle in which the expulsion of the Jews was but one aspect. For the period after the defeat of the "Judeobolshevik" regime in Russia and the extermination of European Jewry, the even more grandiose schemes of *Generalplan Ost* were on the drawing boards, entailing the uprooting and removal of over thirty million people, solely on racial grounds. These plans had nothing to do either with an anti-Bolshevik crusade or the frustrations and exigencies of defeat in total war; they were racism gone berserk, and Mayer misses this point because he does not take Hitler's racism seriously. For the same reason, he cannot conceive of a Nazi program to kill Jews solely because they were Jews. "Biological politics" was fundamental to Nazism. As Mayer's book demonstrates, an attempt to situate the Nazis' Final Solution in history without taking this into account is bound to go astray. □

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Rosellen Brown

DAZZLED BY THE LIGHT

A TURN IN THE SOUTH, by V. S. Naipaul. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. 320 pp. $18.95.

Somewhere around the middle of *A Turn in the South,* V. S. Naipaul compares his journey to a film shot in natural light—he is taking his trip as it comes, moving around without a thesis to prove or a desire to "cover" every corner. This randomness makes for the considerable strengths of his book and accounts, in part, for its limitations, some of which Naipaul acknowledges. It also suggests, with a refreshingly humble honesty—Naipaul has never been known for humility—that with a little flick of the kaleidoscope the pieces of color might have arranged themselves quite differently to show another picture. The question is interesting—*is* there such a thing as a chance journey of this kind, or will a writer's intuitions and needs, try as he might to be "neutral," force him to search out what he wants to see?

In his opening chapter nearly all the book's themes appear: the binding force of community; the power of "order and faith and music and melancholy," what Naipaul calls later "the little neurosis" of preoccupation with race, the complex dynamics of change and progress on the one hand and historical continuity and stagnation on the other.

Naipaul knows a young man, black, whose sense of home—a small town in Georgia—is so potent that it keeps him whole in New York, at the same time that it makes him uncomfortable in Harlem because, he says, "My rhythm is different . . . I'm not angry. Most people in Harlem are angry." Curious to find out why this might be so, Naipaul accompanies his friend to that home, a town in tobacco country, and there we meet his family, go to church with them, drive around the countryside hearing each piece of land identified without (acknowledged) bitterness according to the race of its owner. It's a perfect beginning for a novelist—character and landscape, expected tensions dissipated, real ones wholly unexpected. Confronting this family and their sense of home, he begins to understand his friend's rootedness.

Here Naipaul's strengths and weaknesses manifest themselves quickly: He is a sharp observer, but in this book a somewhat sentimental, or at least an idealizing, tone shows through. Traveling around the impoverished and failing countryside, he pronounces it, lyrically, "a landscape of small ruins. Houses and farmhouses and tobacco barns had simply been abandoned. The decay of each was individual, and they were all beautiful in the afternoon light." He catches himself sometimes, comments on his disappointment at seeing where his friend's mother lives, in a (typical enough) concrete block house, "not the tree-embowered house I had in my imagination." Naipaul, so acerbic in books set in Africa and Trinidad, here seems to be indulging a softness in which the long shadow of time and the wistfulness of defeat lie across his vision, taking off the edge of criticism.

Perhaps he is so humble because he recognizes what an outsider he is—we are, after all, in the company of a man who has to ask someone what a "homecoming queen" is! Yet there are times when he doesn't press quite hard enough and goes back to his motel having bought the company manners and missed the whole story.

The "formality" of his new black friends in church charms him so much that at one point later he thinks of prayer meetings and begins to cry. Because his experience with street-corner preachers in Trinidad has led him to expect a black religion of "ecstasy and trance," he is unprepared for the complex mores of the little local church, for the family continuity it provides, and for its "communal-social side." He reports on the fineness of the line he discovers here between spirituality and politics, between vocation (in the sense of being called) and vocation (as in employment) and begins to understand that southern religion is a container with many corners and layers. Among its civilizing functions is that "in no other part of the world had I found people so driven by the idea of good behavior and the religious life. And that was true for black and white." Returning to his original sense of the church as the house of the spirit, Naipaul draws a bewitching parallel to his own birthplace. "This kind of heat . . . throw[s] people into themselves, as much as the winters of the Far North are said to throw Scandinavians into themselves . . . perhaps this six-month summer weather . . . was a factor . . . in the almost Indian obsession of the South with religion, the idea of a life beyond the senses."

But there is a good deal more to the effect of the church on the South, and Naipaul's uncharacteristically innocent view fails to confront its all-too-frequent worst. He is spared, or spares himself, the conservative, frequently dishonest machinations of inordinately powerful ministers (not all as rich or famous as the Bakkers—just small-time promoters);

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the kind of divisiveness between churches in many small communities that long ago gave rise to the joke about needing two churches, one to go to and one never to set foot in; the racism of certain fundamentalist sects, not to mention many of the mainstream churches.

There are other moments when Naipaul fails to press hard, out of courtesy or because, learning a whole new language, he finds it too hard to be challenging. He has moments of irritability and suspiciousness, but most often they have to do with someone's personal rudeness, not with the elusiveness or superficiality of a response. He is shown around Charleston by a man whose mastery of local lore is fascinating but, given Naipaul's diffidence, could have been gathered by a host of faceless interviewers.

Or when he does ask a probing question—"Is it hard for you to live with Negroes without having authority over them?"—he allows the clichéd response to remain unchallenged: "I've always lived with Negroes. . . . We're good friends. . . . I feel very fortunate to have them" (old family servants living next door). "They look out for us." If he hears this familiar justification with a sense of irony (or one in which a judge says that the blacks he knew as a child had rhythm!), he leaves it to us to register it. Naipaul's shrewdness makes its appearance sporadically and tends to emerge most often in interpretive summaries rather than in face-to-face encounters when he might have given chase or simply dug more deeply.

And then there is the rhapsodic encounter between Naipaul and the Rednecks. Lord knows nobody gets kicked around as much as the southern shit-kicker. Again, it takes an "outsider" to admit or submit to Naipaul's bemused education in country music, beer-drinking, wife-bashing. If he's charmed by it all that might be because the sins and glories of the condition are fessed up to by a fabulous, gilt-tongued character named Campbell, who proves no one can say anything worse about your kind than you can and still look good for it.

Shyly, but clearly entranced and trying to be balanced in his admiration (because he knows they're "authoritarian" and not much respected by the higher classes), Naipaul ventures, "From the way [Campbell] had described them, I thought of them as a tribe, almost an Indian tribe, free spirits wandering freely over empty spaces." "But weren't they now a little cramped, even in Mississippi?" In spite of or because of their vilification by their "betters," he tries for independent judgment; sees "pride and style and a fashion code . . . the pickup trucks dashingly driven." He sees "three rednecks fishing in a pond . . . as I might have hurried to see an unusual bird or a deer . . . barebacked, but with the wonderful baseball hats, in a boat among the reeds, on a weekday afternoon . . . people with a certain past, living out a certain code, a threatened species." Naipaul might be surprised at the response his patronizing awe would fetch from the barebacked gentlemen in question.

Worse, he has elsewhere given us a chapter on nearly all-white Forsyth County, Georgia, where the Klan defends white purity while it makes a rather different fashion statement in bedsheets and pointy hats; has also mentioned, in passing, sixty-three old boxes of lynching records he discovers at Tuskegee. But he is so taken with the embattled macho image, half-cowboy, half-Indian, that he fails to make the necessary connection; or rather, reduces the species to the unfairly stigmatized proponents of a *style*, victims of class snobbery, Huck Finns by the hundreds.

Compassion and a refusal to knuckle under to demeaning stereotype is admirable, but the three fishermen represent one of the dangers of "on the road" impressions. In a sense Naipaul has freed himself from the need to make connected, responsible judgments that extend beyond their specific moment.

At his most acute Naipaul does make connections, the best of them in relation to his own world. He writes well about black leaders, wonders if, with black politics "still racial and redemptive and simple" (as in backward or revolutionary countries), blacks in the United States could be expected to "stand apart from their leaders, any more than it was possible for people of the Caribbean or Africa to stand apart from the racial or tribal chiefs . . . they had created." For West Indian blacks, "the leader lived (or lived it up) on behalf of his people; and the people lived through their leader. Ordinary ideas of morality and propriety didn't apply. A leader wasn't required to be modest and correct; those were the virtues of another world."

Canny as this is, Naipaul understands that charisma is well and good but that change will come, as Andrew Young tells him, with such unsexy realities as job training programs: the virtues of *this* world. "What we are dealing with now is a problem of the underclass—black and white. The black underclass gets caught up in drugs and crime . . . the white . . . in drugs and crime and Klan. You can march until your feet drop, but you ain't going to change it that way."

Considering a young up-and-coming black politi-

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cian Naipaul is reminded of comparable Caribbean politicians who might have overthrown a system and established a new power they had fashioned themselves. But here in Atlanta, he sees that all the president of the City Council can do is say no. "Perhaps the very dignity that the politics of the city offered a black man made him more aware of the great encircling wealth and true power of white Atlanta." And he understands the bitterness of such a system: "Just as civil-rights legislation gave rights without money or acceptance, so perhaps city politics gave position without strength, and stimulated another, unassuageable kind of rage."

About two-thirds of the way through *A Turn in the South,* Naipaul admits that the idea of a book composed in natural light must give way, eventually, to "some lines of inquiry," a theme. But perhaps to his credit—he is, after all, not only a man far from home but a novelist (and sometime journalist), not a sociologist—no clear theme emerges. Instead he gives us a lovely section that begins with a description of the gate at his grandmother's island house that seems to him, very early, to separate the world within from the world without. By his own complex connections, he comes around from there—from a demonstration of his respect for both realms—to an appreciation that especially in a racially mixed society where many things have the force of taboos "sensed rather than consciously worked out . . . participation is different from witness; they engage different sides of a person."

So, too, his book. We see a General Motors plant under construction in Tennessee, a catfish farm in Mississippi; we visit a second and distinctly unrednecked Campbell: Will, the maverick minister; we hear Naipaul's speculations on W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, visit writers as disparate as Al Murray in Harlem, who proudly introduces him to the vitality of Harlem architecture and culture, and Anne Rivers Siddons in Atlanta, who speaks with sensitivity about the necessity, in a place where public issues are so charged, to "hoard" passion, spare feeling "for private life." What he doesn't see and what would be difficult to rhapsodize over is the shameful poverty of the tiny towns in the Mississippi delta so little changed in generations. He does not see segregated academies or ineffective black schools. He doesn't see many of the worst irritants that keep the hopeless without hope while the upwardly mobile or the already-comfortable congratulate themselves for surviving modest change.

It isn't fair to expect Naipaul to have gone everywhere and seen everything, especially since he denies any intention to be exhaustive. But books like this implicitly suggest a representative wholeness. Surely the last thing we want from V. S. Naipaul is a program. But there is no rage, and the only tears are nostalgic. He has, in the end, manipulated (or been bewitched by) that natural light to show the physiognomy of this place at its most becoming angle. He ends with an enraptured visit to the poet/farmer James Applewhite, who, he says, has "arrived at a feeling for 'the sanctity of the smallest gestures.' " That is essentially what Naipaul has done, and his elegiac, unembittered book, only partially successful in its analysis, is large-hearted, naive, and knowing in proportions new for Naipaul. For all that he comments (disparagingly) about the kind of traveller who merely writes about himself, I think he has unintentionally defined himself here as a man profoundly sweetened by the "order and faith and music and melancholy" he finds in our South and perhaps wishes he could have for himself. □

Thomas Byrne Edsall

IRISH POWER

RAINBOW'S END: IRISH-AMERICANS AND THE DILEMMAS OF URBAN MACHINE POLITICS, 1840–1985, by Steven P. Erie. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988.

Steven P. Erie's *Rainbow's End* is a major study of Irish-American political organizations in eight cities. Although the focus of Erie's book is on the forces behind the successes and failures of such powerful figures as Richard Daley, James Michael Curley, David Lawrence, and Pat Nash, and the organizations they built, *Rainbow's End* has broad implications for the racial tensions that now characterize every large city in America.

The Irish in many respects used political power to achieve goals similar to those now sought by blacks. Through impressive registration campaigns, which often included getting thousands of immigrants naturalized so they could vote, Irish-Americans by the end of the nineteenth century had gained far more power than warranted by their numbers alone in cities from New York to San Francisco. In the process, Irish-Americans laid claim to the rewards of power: "On the eve of the Depression, more than one third of the Irish workforce in machine cities depended on patronage for their livelihood," Erie writes. In New York in 1930, 52 percent of local

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government jobs were held by Irish-Americans; in Jersey City, 58 percent; in Albany, 41 percent.

The machines handed out jobs that required little training or education: "[T]he patronage created was blue collar . . . policemen, firemen and city laborers." Erie argues that these jobs did little to move the recipients into the middle class. Contrary to the widely held view among political scientists that the machines were a critical step up the status ladder, Irish machine patronage was "the wrong kind for group social mobility . . . [it] hindered Irish economic advancement." Still, it is equally possible to argue that jobs requiring little formal education or training are ideal for members of a first- and second-generation immigrant community seeking better lives for their children.

But to take the comparison with black Americans a step further, it is just these kinds of jobs with low entry-level requirements that are currently most needed by urban blacks. As William Julius Wilson of the University of Chicago and John Kasarda of the University of North Carolina have documented in detail, a major factor in the decline of central cities has been the two-decade-long exodus of manufacturing employment providing jobs for those without high education levels. "Those very blue-collar jobs upon which poor minorities are most dependent for steady employment and economic sustenance have disappeared by the hundreds of thousands, leaving behind what is for them an economic wasteland," Wilson recently wrote in a chapter of the book *Quiet Riots*.

Blacks, in fact, are coming into urban power just when the exodus of manufacturing jobs coincides with a declining tax base, severely restricting opportunities to enlarge city patronage. From 1900 to 1930, the total number of local jobs in New York shot up from 54,386 to 148,421, with well over half the 94,035 new ones going to Irish-Americans. The near tripling of city jobs over those thirty years compares to the effective stagnation of city employment during the last twenty years in cities like Atlanta, Detroit, Baltimore, and Chicago where blacks have taken over local government.

If these contractions were not enough, politically ascendant blacks now face far more severe civil service restrictions on patronage than were present fifty years ago. In addition, the Irish bosses resisted with varying degrees of success the inclusion of such newly rising groups as Italians, Poles, Jews, and blacks. "It is time to lay the rainbow theory [that the machines acted as urban melting pots for all groups] to rest" Erie writes. "Throughout most of their history, urban machines did not incorporate immigrants other than the Irish."

In contrast to the Irish, who first used city government to provide a broad base of employment and then used political muscle to amass capital—the real key to power—through construction, insurance, development, legal work, and other commercial ventures profiting from public decisions, Erie describes a black community dependent for survival at both top and bottom on the welfare system. In Chicago, with the active support of the Daley machine, welfare participation rates rose in the black community from 18 percent in 1969 to 32 percent in 1979—rates that paralleled those in nonmachine cities. Roughly the same proportion of urban blacks in 1979 were on welfare as the proportion of the Irish workforce that held government jobs in 1930.

For the black middle class, the expanding welfare state of the 1960s and 1970s became a critically important source of employment. Erie found that in Chicago 54 percent of all black job gains, public and private, were in social welfare agencies. Figures compiled by Bart Landry in *The New Black Middle Class* suggest that, nationwide, black employment gains have been closely linked to the expansion of public- and private-sector jobs tied to the welfare state.

In the long run, for both middle-class and poor blacks, the welfare state is a weak reed on which to build solid power in this country. For those at the bottom, welfare is in no way comparable to patronage employment, or employment of any kind, as a stepping-stone to the middle class. For those in the middle class, employment in public and private social agencies provides few opportunities for the sustained acquisition of either saleable skills or capital—both of which are essential, in most modern economies, for the achievement of real, economically based power. Although the two do not overlap entirely, it is, in effect, impossible to separate power from money. Power in a modern economy requires extensive involvement in commercial and entrepreneurial activities—real estate development, road building, banking, manufacturing—which in turn provide mechanisms to profit from political participation. The development of a substantial group of entrepreneurs prepared to capitalize on political power is one area where blacks face far more difficulty than the Irish at comparable periods in their histories.

The use of power by blacks to expand employment and education possibilities has diverged from past practices in another major respect: Blacks have turned to affirmative action, preferential hiring programs, and quotas as alternatives to traditional patronage. It is, however, just these programs that have seriously exacerbated urban racial tension and spurred the white backlash voting that can be found

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in the white, outer-rings surrounding almost every major American city. It is just this kind of tension—reaching maximum intensity where the competition between blacks and whites for jobs, housing, tax dollars, and other resources is most direct—that has contributed to the explosive growth of Republican voting in such white communities.

Sharp racial disagreements over preferential hiring programs are, however, evident not only among black and white working-class competitors for municipal jobs but in the entire electorate. In 1986, white voters said they oppose preferential hiring and promotion to correct past discrimination by a margin of 87–13, according to National Election Studies (NES), while blacks supported such efforts by a 68–32 margin. In 1985 just over 69 percent of white voters agreed with the statement that "most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried," according to NES. Nearly 80 percent agreed with the statement that "Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up; blacks should do the same without any special favors."

Although the legitimacy and efficacy of preferential-hiring (and college-admission) programs are subject to a widespread debate, there is no question that the Irish "overcame prejudice and worked their way up" with an extraordinary array of "special favors" from the public till. In addition, Irish-Americans provoked deep hostility among those competing ethnic groups that got a far smaller share of patronage.

Irish-Americans did not, however, seek either legislative or court sanction to justify their taking of special privilege. The Irish used political power as one part of an arsenal of weaponry to achieve the far more significant goal of economic autonomy. One area *Rainbow's End* could have explored in much greater detail is the extremely complex set of relationships between the assimilation of Irish-Americans into prevailing elites, Irish roots in Roman Catholicism and European culture, the self-determined channeling of community resources into establishing a professionally skilled upper-middle class, and the growing ability of the Irish to acquire the capital essential to establish a dynamic intersection between economic competitiveness and political power.

A central struggle now facing the United States as a whole and blacks most directly is how the black community can develop its own version of the formula for the critical mass—the combination of power, resources, inner strength, cultural tradition, and stratagems for overcoming racism—to make it possible for this large minority of the nation to be fully competitive. There have been substantial gains for middle-class blacks over the past generation, but these gains have yet to translate downward to the bottom third of the black community, where conditions have been worsening.

Solutions are not likely to emerge easily from the national political debate, in large part because race has become perhaps the most important dividing line separating the Democratic and Republican parties. Because the overwhelming majority of blacks remains aligned with the Democratic party, there is very little competitive incentive to engage in what could be a highly productive battle between the two parties to develop alternative economic strategies within central cities. Instead, as was the case with the Irish, Jews, Italians, and Poles before them, the burden will fall largely on black leaders to learn what they must innovate alone as well as what can be adapted from the experiences of other ethnic immigrant groups. □

James B. Rule

UNDERCOVER SHENANIGANS

UNDERCOVER: POLICE SURVEILLANCE IN AMERICA, by Gary T. Marx. Berkeley: University of California Press. A Twentieth Century Fund Book, 1988. xxv, 283 pp. $25.00.

The trouble with undercover police operations, Gary Marx's excellent new book might lead us to conclude, is that they breed government waste: not waste of time or money so much as of human personality and integrity of the law itself. Marx gives a case in point:

> Consider, for example, a northern California police officer who rode with the Hell's Angels for a year and a half. He was responsible for a large number of arrests, including previously almost untouchable higher-level drug dealers. He was praised for doing a "magnificent job." But this came at a cost of heavy drug use, alcoholism, brawling, the breakup of his family, and his inability to fit back into routine police work after the investigation was over. The result was resignation from the force, several bank robberies, and a prison term.

Not all undercover operations involve such flamboyant "cover" as membership in the Hell's Angels. Some involve inciting public figures to accept pay for influence—as in the Abscam scandal. Others require police officers to impersonate prostitutes, drunks, and derelicts in hopes of encouraging

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passers-by to attempt illegal acts. Still others, as in the FBI's CISPES operations, involve surveillance and infiltration of grass-roots groups engaged in nothing more sinister than exercise of their First Amendment rights.

The agencies that mount such operations range from the local police to federal agencies, including the FBI. But this book pinpoints something crucial that the operations share—a tendency to render ambiguous the boundaries between "law enforcement" and the lawless activities they are supposed to curtail. Undercover surveillance thus raises the most delicate questions about what values are being upheld in law enforcement, and what government powers we are prepared to create in the process.

Gary Marx, a sociologist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has published many studies of crime and policing, as well as of dissent and protest movements. His first book, *Protest and Prejudice,* is among the most acute scholarly studies of the motives and attitudes fueling America's ghetto riots of the late 1960s. Like many sociologists of his generation, Marx's scholarly concerns grew out of personal engagement with the social issues of the 1960s. In the opening pages of this book he describes his first direct encounter with undercover policing—the infiltration of a Berkeley Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) chapter in which he was involved by a police "plant," who disrupted the group's work and ultimately absconded with its funds. Some two decades later, he undertook this critical study of operations where law-enforcement agents present themselves as something they are not.

For many of us, undercover operations are easy to hate. They tend to put arbitrary power in the hands of those least likely to use it wisely:

> Undercover means fit within a general conception of social control through threat. As with other privacy-invading tactics, such as electronic surveillance or access to confidential records, they may be carried out with no intention of formal prosecution. . . .
>
> Mayors in Seattle, Detroit, Houston, and other cities discovered after their elections that their predecessors had made them targets of police intelligence units. Groups seeking police reform, such as the ACLU and other nonviolent organizations, were also targets of surveillance.

No one concerned about abuse of state power can fail to be alarmed by such accounts. And such alarm is well founded, given the special potency conferred by the capacity to amass "facts" of all kinds. No one likes the idea of being investigated. We live in a world where everyone is expected to have "records" of various kinds, and where such records are constantly being reinterpreted in light of changing contexts. These facts confer great discretion on those with the power to compile records and to shape their use.

Such reflections may convince many that undercover operations ought to be proscribed outright. Marx quotes E.L. Doctorow:

> I like my cops in uniforms with badge numbers I can read. I like police departments with budgets argued at public hearings. Officers, detectives, should be neatly dressed and easily identifiable.

Yet Marx himself acknowledges a turn in his own convictions here. He began work on this book, he says, believing that all undercover operations should be outlawed; yet he reluctantly abandoned this view in the course of the research. As one reads *Undercover,* the tension between these two positions becomes increasingly vivid. Undercover operations spark revulsion when directed against what we consider innocent variations in life style and political preference. Yet if we look to government to protect individual rights and safety, how do we react to groups geared to subverting these things? How should governments respond to secret, paramilitary organizations that preach—and plan—the violent persecution of minorities? What response is appropriate to highly organized criminal industries that challenge the state in their use of violence and intimidation? Without means of penetrating conspir-

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atorial groups, governments are apt to remain ineffectual.

So we breach the principle of categorically rejecting undercover operations; under some circumstances, it appears, the dangers of renouncing them outweigh those of having them. Yet this more nuanced position is infinitely more difficult to put into effect than any categorical one. What principles should guide these operations, and what legal and bureaucratic procedures offer hope of implementing such principles?

Marx leaves no doubt of the evils that demand control by such procedures. Corruption of the lives and personalities of those who carry them out, for one. Corruption of the law itself, for another. Witting or unwitting encouragement of the criminal activities ostensibly being combated is yet another. Damage to "innocent bystanders" by the illegal activities either feigned or encouraged by undercover operations is still another. *Undercover* shines a strong, unflinching light on the full array of human and political consequences that ensue when law-enforcement resorts to masquerade.

But the stubborn question remains: What strategies, what procedures offer hope of combating such evils? A number of legal and policy directions are available. One common option is development of formal guidelines. Agencies ranging from the FBI to state and local police forces operate under such ground rules not just because of ethical concern but also to forestall legal action from victims of undercover operations and political backlash.

A stronger approach would be to require court orders before undercover operations could be mounted. The warrant procedure could require that those seeking to carry out the operations specify the nature of the suspected wrongdoing, the form to be taken by the undercover operation, the period over which it would be carried out, the persons likely to be affected, and why more conventional means would not suffice. Warrants would then be issued strictly for the activities and the periods specified, with breaches treated as seriously as illegal wire taps or illegal searches. Needless to say, law-enforcement authorities themselves have shown little enthusiasm for such requirements.

Marx discusses these and several other modes of control. Yet this discussion leaves many questions unanswered. It is easy enough to say that controls are necessary and easier still to add that the importance of the results sought in such operations must be "balanced" against the evils and dangers that may attend them.

No doubt they must. The problem is, the notion of "balancing" is simply a metaphor here. It gives no guidance for actually deciding how to set policy without some way of ascribing weights to the different values involved. How, practically, are we to weigh the liabilities of having law-enforcers pose as prostitutes, drug traffickers, or motorcycle outlaws against the specific gains such strategies are supposed to offer? In short, how bad are the bads, how good are the goods—and how can we create a legal and policy apparatus that applies such a reckoning consistently and evenhandedly?

Marx does not provide precise answers. As far as I know, neither has anyone else. What *Undercover* does do is to establish the bases from which such answers might evolve. By pinpointing the subtlety and consequences of what is at stake, Gary Marx's book opens the possibility of intelligent debate over some deeply disturbing activities. □

Richard Wolin

JACOBINISM REVISITED

THE FROZEN REVOLUTION: AN ESSAY ON JACOBINISM, by Ferenc Fehèr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 178 pp.

Since the appearance of François Furet's *Penser la Révolution Française* in 1978, conventional wisdom concerning the French Revolution has fallen upon hard times. For quite some time such "conventional wisdom" has been left wing. In the nineteenth century the Revolution served to buttress the legitimacy of republican claims. In the twentieth century, when the achievements of the Republic could be treated as an accomplished fact, it was the socialists (e.g., Jaurès) who embraced the events of 1789 as portents of a revolution that had not yet been made. The promise of universal equality heralded by the revolt of the Parisian masses was stopped short, we are told, by the triumph of bourgeois self-interest. Yet this only meant that the Revolution had merely gone halfway; and the Revolution to come would complete the work begun by its forebear. For most of the twentieth century, indeed, the French Revolution has enjoyed the status of a left-wing icon.

In recent years, however, conditions were prepared for a major historiographical break by an event that seemingly had little relation to French history: the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's exposé of the Soviet gulag. Suddenly, revolutionary mythology seemed to fall under suspicion. The Bolsheviks, after all, had viewed the Jacobin dictatorship as a

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historical preclude to their own. And thus, with the appearance of Solzhenitsyn's book, and the left-wing self-scrutiny it provoked in France, an intellectual space was created in which conventional socialist wisdom concerning the Revolution could be criticized and reexamined.

Ferenc Fehèr's provocative and original study, *The Frozen Revolution: An Essay on Jacobinism* carries the process of demythologization a step further. A thesis merely suggested by Furet—that "Stalinism took root in a modified Jacobin tradition that consisted in grafting onto the Soviet phenomenon the ideas of a new beginning and a new nation in the vanguard of history"—becomes the point of departure for Fehèr's reexamination of Jacobinism. And throughout the course of his investigation, Fehèr keeps a constant eye on the tension between Jacobin historical realities and the role Jacobinism has come to play in the twentieth century *imaginaire révolutionnaire*.

At the same time, the differences between Furet's and Fehèr's understandings of Jacobinism must also be stressed. Furet, following Tocqueville, tends to view Jacobinism as a logical outgrowth of the leveling tendencies of abstract egalitarianism when unchecked by the moderating influences of liberal political institutions. Fehèr, on the other hand, sees the Jacobin experiment as a departure from the events that preceded it. Closer to the views of Hannah Arendt, he stresses the specifically *political* aspect of Jacobin revolutionary practice, unlike Furet, who collapsed the "social" and "political" dimensions of the revolutionary process too quickly. In this respect, Fehèr's book provides an instructive correction to Furet. The "causal factors" that account for Jacobinism as a historical "first" are summarized by Fehèr as follows:

> a driving of the revolutionary process beyond all limits as the criterion of radicalism, an amalgamation of radical political motives with social demands, and the rejection of the whole armory of parliamentary and party policy as it had begun to emerge in the first years of the Revolution.

Fehèr—like Furet before him—must cut through a maze of earlier interpretations. The major failings of most prior views of Jacobinism have been a dogmatic treatment of the Revolution as a unified stream of events as well as the attempt to understand Jacobinism itself solely in structural or class-specific terms. It is perhaps with reference to the last point that Fehèr scores his major breakthrough: In his view, what is historically specific about Jacobinism will forever recede from our grasp unless we accord the ideological and philosophical features of the movement their due. In this regard, the crucial intellectual groundwork for Jacobin ideology was laid first by Rousseau's notion of the "general will." When coupled with his pessimistic philosophical anthropology, Rousseau's political philosophy implied that if the realm of liberty were to be realized, a privileged minority, as yet uncorrupted by the influences of a degenerate "civilization," might need "temporarily" to seize the reigns of government in order to institute a moral political order. The second crucial underpinning was Sièyes's "metaphysics of the nation" as the formative power of modern political life. This theory was elaborated in a way such that all institutional or procedural hindrances to "the nation" as a political entity were immediately viewed as suspect: The nation was to be homogeneous and no one could stand outside of it. And thus, the seeds of revolutionary despotism were already present in the first Assembly—the Assembly that progressively minded individuals frequently point to as the Revolution's "liberal option." As Fehèr shows, four years later, in the Jacobin constitution of 1793, the rights of man and citizen are reinterpreted such that the citizen, rather than being primarily a bearer of "rights," is understood in the first instance as a "subject" of the republic.

Perhaps the major aspect of revolutionary mythology that Fehèr seeks to undo is that of "revolutionary justice," the idea that a revolutionary situation warrants a "political suspension of the ethical." Perhaps it is not much of a feat to make this criticism stick, in the post-Gulag era, with reference to the Jacobin reign of terror. And appropriately, this is not the ground where Fehèr feels great need to stake his claim as a critic of the *imaginaire révolutionnaire*. Instead, he focuses on the incident that has long been considered a first principle of revolutionary mythology: the execution of Louis XVI. Here Fehèr directs his argument against the most sophisticated defense of the regicides, Michael Walzer's interpretive essay in *Regicide and Revolution;* above all, against Walzer's claims that (1) the execution of Louis set no precedent for the Jacobin terror that followed and (2) the King's death was a necessary and justifiable act from the standpoint of the Revolution's survival and goals. The conclusion Fehèr reaches on this matter is unyielding: "In making the law 'revolutionary,' the revolutionary actors made law political and politics lawless."

Fehèr's arguments concerning the trial are forceful and convincing. On two points especially his position is persuasive. First, his critique of the pseudo-legality of the "symbolic trials," i.e., the attempt to try Louis not for his deeds but as a symbol of "monarchy in general." There is no circumventing the fact this represents a form of ex post facto

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justice and thus, in a strictly legal sense, is wholly unjustifiable. Second, his refutation of Walzer's defense of regicide on "utilitarian" grounds, that is, that only a public trial and execution of the monarch could do away with monarchy as an institution. As Fehèr points out, the ensuing course of French history (at least until 1871) stands as a refutation of this claim.

As a founding act of the Republic, regicide formed a precedent that was ominous if not inherently fatal to the future course of the Revolution. There is no escaping the fact that the trial and execution of Louis was in the first instance a political act, and hence unjustifiable according to standards of formal legality. Both the moral and legal issues surrounding his execution remain to this day fascinating. They raise important questions concerning the problem of justice under exceptional situations. For example, could not the trial and execution of Nazi officers following World War II be viewed as an instance of ex post facto justice?

Yet the difficulties involved in addressing such matters should in no way imply that the problem of justice in situations without legal precedent should be held in abeyance. Certainly, there are general principles, many of which have their origins in the ideology of the French Revolution itself, to which we can appeal under such circumstances. For this reason Kant suggests that the execution of the king on the part of the people is justifiable as an act of self-preservation—"For that may be done by the people out of fear, lest if he is allowed to live he may again acquire power and inflict punishment on them"—but never as a judicial process, since this would be a perversion of the principles of law.

Fehèr shows little sympathy for any such justification of Louis's execution, especially the moral-philosophical variety expounded by Saint-Just and Robespierre. As he observes:

> the precedent set by the trial of the King can be dangerously expanded. If it is a crime to reign, so by implication is it a crime to have been a noble, a priest, a rich man, a suspect or an egoist. . . . the trial of the King introduced "political justice" in post-Enlightenment politics. Its supreme maxim read as follows: anybody, and if need be, almost everybody, can be crushed if those who respect not forms, but who share ruthless principles, hold sufficient power to present their decree of proscription as the "interest of the cause" that stands higher than the banal idea of justice.

The determining instance for Fehèr's understanding of Jacobinism is the concrete application of the Jacobin model by Lenin—the "Russian Jacobin"—during the Bolshevik Revolution. Here, it is hard to disagree with his conclusion that the major historical lessons to be learned from Jacobinism as a premise of Western political modernity are negative. Fehèr presents us with a seminal contribution toward understanding the pathology of the modern *imaginaire révolutionnaire*. □

Lewis Coser

FROM A HEROIC PAST

ALL THE RIGHT ENEMIES: THE LIFE AND MURDER OF CARLO TRESCA, by Dorothy Gallagher. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988. 321 pp. $24.95.

Carlo Tresca's life was exciting and romantic, the stuff of legends. The anarcho-syndicalist Italian-born labor agitator, journalist, and fierce foe of capitalism, Stalinism, and fascism was a stormy figure on the American left. He was so flamboyant in the American labor movement during the first four decades of this century that it would seem impossible to write a mediocre biography of him. Yet I feel that, even though the book has been praised by many reviewers, Alfred Kazin among

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them, Gallagher's account doesn't fully succeed in doing him justice. What is more, she fails to make us understand the man's historic position in the American labor movement and his major role in American anarcho-syndicalist circles before the First World War and after.

Tresca came to America from Italy in 1904, only in his twenties but already a veteran socialist organizer and pamphleteer who was a fugitive from justice, having been convicted of libel in the course of his fierce attacks against local dignitaries in the socialist paper of his native town. Soon after his arrival in America, he plunged into the struggles of the American labor movement, first as a left socialist and soon after as a central figure in the anarcho-syndicalist movement closely allied with the International Workers of the World. Tresca came fully into his own as a key leader and agitator during the famous strike of the textile workers of Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912. Sponsored by the IWW leader, Big Bill Haywood, Tresca became one of the main organizers and propagandists in this historic strike. That strike brought a labor victory and allowed the IWW, until then mainly rooted on the West Coast, to gain attention in the East Coast labor movement, as well as among the thirty-five thousand recent immigrants who were sweated in the worsted mills of Lawrence. These Italians, Poles, Greeks, Portuguese, and Russians were brought together under the banner of the IWW at a time when the American Federation of Labor was unwilling to help organize this foreign underclass. A year later, when twenty-five thousand silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey, struck, the IWW again took the lead and Tresca was back in the thick of the struggle. He had by then definitively turned his back on the official socialist movement and cast his lot with the largely unorganized and semiskilled or unskilled foreign workers who were willing to listen to his revolutionary oratory and felt alienated from an official trade union movement that was largely organized around the craft ideals of native American labor.

Tresca was imprisoned several times in Pennsylvania coal towns and elsewhere. He fought epic battles against reformist union leaders and individualistic anarchists. The paper he edited, *Il Martello,* became his preferred instrument to castigate the enemies of labor as well as its too timid and tepid friends. He helped organize the unemployed in New York City and fought in strike battles on the Mesabi iron range and among New York City hotel workers. After Mussolini's coming to power, he fought the powerful fascist agents in America. He became one of the handful of premature anti-Stalinists in the twenties. Beholden to no one—no organization, no labor bureaucracy, no national state—he fought his lonely battle with verve and a large measure of egocentric theatrics.

It stands to reason that such a man would cause a great deal of both loving devotion and passionate hatred. So when he was assassinated on a New York City street corner in 1943, the police had few clues about who might have ordered the murder. Many of us at the time suspected the GPU, others suspected the fascists. Gallagher spends some sixty pages of her book following the various clues and concludes by indicating the name of the probable assassin—who was clearly tied to fascist circles.

Neither this man nor those who hired him were ever indicted. This last part of her book may be quite valuable for the clearing up of some of the mystery that has long surrounded the intricate relationship between the Mafia and American fascist circles as well as the wartime collaboration of the OSS and Lucky Luciano. But this account detracts from the main point, so that the book ends like a detective story rather than a contribution to American labor history.

The author has done a great deal of impressive research and has unearthed much new factual material about Tresca's life and his assassination. Why, then, is it an unsatisfying work? Dorothy Gallagher was fascinated, quite understandably so, by the romantic aspects of Tresca's life. This vibrant and life-loving man strutted on the scene of the labor movement before and after the First World War as if it were an opera. This brilliant agitator, who was also an ardent womanizer and a fierce polemicist, who knew how to love and also to hate with passionate intensity, would naturally tempt his biographer to concentrate on his larger-than-life personality while neglecting the social and political context in which he acted out his life. The author, alas, has not resisted this temptation nearly enough. As a result, she has painted him as a Carlylian hero rather than as a figure who can be fully understood only against the background of the American labor movement in the turbulent first decades of our century. Nevertheless, there are enough new data and explanations here to inspire a future historian of the labor movement to provide a more balanced picture.

P.S. At the huge memorial meeting for the slain Tresca, which I attended and which was addressed by, among others, the veteran Russian Socialist and former companion of Lenin, Angelica Balabanoff, I was sitting near a burly Irish policeman who clearly didn't understand a word of Balabanoff's fierce Italian oratory. But at her climax he burst into tears. □

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Irving Howe

GENE AND ME

REQUIRED READING, by Eugene McCarthy. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988. 299 pp. $17.95.

I used to be an admirer of Eugene McCarthy. While Senator from Minnesota, he was just about the first prominent figure in the political establishment to come out unambiguously against the Vietnam War. When he started to campaign for the Democratic nomination for president in 1968, McCarthy heartened thousands of young people who had been struggling to make opposition to the war a major issue in American politics. The more dogmatic elements of the New Left refused to support McCarthy (he was not for the revolution . . .), but others joined with a growing number of liberals to work in his campaign. Had it not been for McCarthy's intelligence and courage at that point, Bobby Kennedy probably would not have entered the 1968 primary as a somewhat less forthright critic of the war.

McCarthy didn't win the nomination, but even in defeat his campaign brightened American public life, and at the end of the primary campaign there were thousands of young Americans, now with political experience, who were devoted to him. It seemed that he would remain a major figure, the caustic spokesman for the opposition.

And then something strange happened, exactly how or why it is still not clear. After the 1968 election, in which the unspeakable Richard Nixon won, our man Gene resigned his seat in the U.S. Senate and retired from public life. Those who had been close to him were shaken. Some felt he lacked stamina, the strength of character needed for serving as spokesman for a minority. Others felt he had yielded to personal pique. Still others felt McCarthy, fancying himself a poet of sorts, had been lured by the delights of the literary life—he had become friendly with Robert Lowell, an admirer of his campaign, and (it was said) Gene now cared more for literary salons than political arenas.

Whatever the cause, McCarthy largely withdrew from public life, becoming a sort of adjunct to academic institutions and an occasional journalist. I knew him slightly in those days and recognized his considerable powers as a public figure and, more vaguely, some flaw—vanity? petulance?—that kept him from playing the part that, one felt, had become his historical privilege. And then, in 1980, to my astonishment, McCarthy endorsed Ronald Reagan—an act of wanton foolishness, to say nothing of political betrayal.

Over the years, meanwhile, McCarthy has been writing little pieces for various papers, from the *New Republic* to the *Culpeper News,* now collected in this book. Some of them are keen politically, offering suggestions for reforming the American electoral process and criticisms of our increasingly debased political arrangements. The man has a sharp eye and can turn out a good sentence. But other pieces have a curious way of blending cracker-barrel postures with styles of high savvy, as if to regather the strands of the long-standing tradition of American disenchantment. All of the pieces are fragile, unsustained, the work of a man who will not trouble to develop an argument. All display a brand of literacy that, in the years of Bush and Quayle, makes one regretful, even bitter, about the choices of this talented man.

What could he have done after losing the nomination? He could have stayed in the Senate, fighting hard, speaking eloquently in behalf of a hundred urgent causes. He could have been a voice of sanity in a time of staged falsehood. He could have followed the path of the elder senator Bob LaFollette, the Progressive from Wisconsin who in the early 1920s—a decade with resemblances to the 1980s—spoke up for liberal options. And thereby Gene the Wit, Gene the Charmer could have kept faith with those young people who had rallied to him and were ready to stand with him—if only he had stood by them.

Was it just for a handful of culture that he left us? □

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More on the Canon

Editors:

Having graduated this past year from Amherst College, where the debate over Allen Bloom and canon formation has raged both in the English department and on the pages of student periodicals, I appreciate Irving Howe's stress in the Fall 1988 *Dissent* on the importance of the arguments underway on campuses over course curriculum. Howe sees it as a cruel irony that just as mass numbers of American youths have attained the right to college education a thin cultural gruel is replacing the hearty literary banquet that their elite predecessors enjoyed. He attacks this movement, coming primarily from the campus left, with his wonderful parable of Big Bill Haywood proclaiming that "nothing's too good for the proletariat," meaning that the disadvantaged have the right to aspire to the wealth—economic and cultural—of the elite.

The problem with this allegory, and Howe's whole argument, is that it is subject to the same criticisms that were leveled against Haywood's Socialist party. Just as the Socialists refused to acknowledge race as anything more than a minor corollary to the problem of class in America, Howe dismisses the challenges to the canon over racism and sexism as a misguided populist approach to dealing with the problems of class. There is an eerie revival of the condescension of the Old Left toward the activists of the New Left in the sixties. Just as many of those wounds are healing at the activist level, the same split seems to be reopening on the academic plane.

The fundamental objection to Howe's view lies in the idea that we all sup at the same common culture; that, as he states, "The Bible, Homer, Plato, Sophocles, Shakespeare are central to our culture." The problem is that many Americans feel dragooned into this collective "our." The Greco-Roman-Anglo tradition may be a dominant factor in America, but it is not the only influence on our only partially assimilated society. Where on Howe's list is the *Quran,* the *Gita,* Confucius, and other central cultural artifacts of the peoples of our nation? The stress on the singular importance of "Western culture" not only takes a narrow and exclusionary view of the sources of American culture, it takes a parochial view toward our role as part of international society.

Howe is appalled that Stanford's core curriculum was subject to political bargaining by "constituencies." Yet who is included and excluded in a course labeled as the best in political and social thought is a judgment on historical importance and quality of thought that has tremendous political implications. For Howe to state that questions about gender and race are not cultural issues of importance even in the narrow context of Western culture is an important political statement in itself.

Howe writes that questions of race, gender, and class "are better dealt with in courses in history and sociology." Attacks on the ideological implications of such intellectual division of labor lie at the heart of the canon-bashers' criticism. Canon-formation *is* history, with winners and losers. Victors of any conflict get to rewrite history to place themselves at the teleological endpoint and culmination of all that came before. There are a multitude of disjointed genealogies tracing nonelite counter-cultures, but the only linear "tradition" that can be constituted is that of elite continuity. Thus, we read Plato, but not the Sophists; Augustine, but not the Manichees; Luther, but not the Anabaptists; Locke, but not the Levellers; the *Federalist Papers,* but not the anti-Federalists. Marx is read primarily because he is a cultural "winner" in the land of our chief military rival. The views, lives, and culture of the losers of cultural conflict are discounted so thoroughly that the past is constituted as a nonconflictual tradition whose structure is supposedly not challengeable on political grounds. However, there is a chaos beneath the apparent continuity that the canon, possibly for pedagogical as well as ideological reasons, attempts to conceal.

Literature cannot be considered a separate pristine category from history or theory, especially since it is nearly impossible to differentiate most premodern history from literature. A society's cultural life has important historical and political implications, yet Howe seems to treat literature as if it is merely a benign window into the past. History and literature came into existence as separate academic disciplines in the nineteenth century, not coincidentally at the same time as mass-market fiction began to circulate. Women were extremely successful in this market, while the writers of the canonized "American Renaissance"—Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson, Melville, Whitman—were much less widely read. Hawthorne bitterly denounced "those damn scribbling women," while Melville sought to emulate them in his singularly disastrous novel *Pierre.* Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* is worth study not only because it is a "valuable work," but precisely because it was popular in its own day. If literature does serve to connect us with experiences of the past, as Howe argues, would it not be worthwhile to read novels with which contemporaries of that past identified rather than just the neglected works that today appeal to our modern sensibility? For the same reason, the folk songs, slave narratives, and popular traditions of the past, no matter how rough, are worth study as much as the classics. Understanding how past popular cultures connect with the

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mass culture of our own age, including MTV and westerns, is a valid province of academic study.

Howe notes the lack of engagement with the past that our primary and secondary schools encourage. Even beyond that, texts replace a vision of honest democratic conflict in both history and politics with a vision of technocratic accommodation of interests. The present is seen as a teleological culmination of the past, with the words "power" and "domination" playing no part in the narrative. The most radical ideas contained in the classics will fail to disturb this passive view of history and culture if these ideas are fenced within a "tradition" that emphasizes continuity over conflict.

On a personal side, I find it ironic that Howe blames the canon-bashers for destroying interest in the classics. In my case courses that emphasized canon-bashing fueled interest in the classics. Given the New Critical emphasis of public high school English classes, literature had appeared as a hermeneutically sealed arena, occasionally entertaining and provocative, but generally irrelevant to anything else. But in the context of social history and popular culture of the past, such classics take on an excitement and vitality that they lacked on their own. It was through a course dealing with many of these issues, taught jointly by English professor Andrew Parker and history professor Robert Gross, that I became truly fascinated by classic works. Degrees of opposition, even the desire to "disparage" high culture, feed a greater engagement than a dry desire to read "the best that had been thought and said and done."

In pursuit of a democratic society, and especially a democratic socialist system, the attack on the canon is an important movement. We cannot have a democracy that reserves judgment on our culture solely to a "community of learning which a faculty ought to be." Understanding the interaction between the everyday life of mankind and elite politics and culture will only come through the same vigorous debates and divisions in the academy that must mark any democratic order. There is room for common ground in the fact that all works, popular and the classics, should be put in a mutual context or both will lose much of their capacity for enlightenment. But what is not needed is for allies on the left like Howe to team up with neoconservatives who bemoan the populism and nihilism of the academy. A repetition in the academy of the fracture on the left in the sixties is the last thing we need today with the challenges facing education and society in the future.

NATHAN NEWMAN

Editors:

Shame on Irving Howe ("What Should We Be Teaching?" Fall 1988) for accepting at face value some of the biased, second-hand accounts and straw-man arguments of irresponsible journalists and politicians who show little sign of having read the revisionist scholars they malign. Shouldn't we make informed judgments on the actual case that, say, Marjorie Garber makes for Aphra Behn, rather than dismissing her claims *a priori*?

Howe perpetuates the media myth that Louis L'Amour is being taught at Duke as a "great writer." This has become one of those stock items that get circulated as gospel among the herd of independent neoconservative minds. The fact is that one Duke professor, Jane Tompkins, has been studying L'Amour and other Western writers as part of a historical study of the Western, a genre whose origins Tompkins views, largely negatively, as a reaction against the feminization of American culture in the late nineteenth century. Tompkins's work, and that of many other recent leftists and feminists on mass culture, is squarely within the tradition of the kind of critical genre studies done in the forties and fifties by Robert Warshow, James Agee, Edmund Wilson, and Leslie Fiedler.

DONALD LAZARE
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

IRVING HOWE Replies:

Before pointing his finger of shame, Mr. Lazare should read more carefully. For it turns out, if his letter is accurate, that Louis L'Amour is taught (as I wrote) at Duke, where Professor Tompkins studies "the Western." The phrase "great writer" occurred in my piece, not as an ascription to Professor Tompkins, but as my own ironic descriptive. I sometimes wish we could print in two colors, with the second one reserved for irony. □

Cooperative Ownership

Editors:

Many thanks to George Scialabba for his thoughtful review of my *Christian Socialism* (Winter 1989). I must apologize for not being more clear on the question of cooperative ownership. If a man as bright as Scialabba couldn't catch my drift, I fear for the general readership.

He quotes my quote of Eric Gill as symbolizing my own favorite brand of socialism: "People work best when they own and control their own tools and materials," and then adds: "If Cort means, as he appears to, '*individually* owns and controls,' then this seems a step over the line that separates a proper appreciation of human scale from nostalgia" [emphasis in original].

Maybe I don't catch Scialabba's drift. My book is so full of paeans to worker cooperatives that I would think no one could miss the fact that I do not mean *individual* ownership and control, although that should not be outlawed in small-scale production or distribution. And in the section on Reinhold Niebuhr (p. 276) I emphasize that "there is no tool or factory too big for the worker to own." Obviously such ownership would have to be through a cooperative, which, incidentally, is also a form of private property, *socialized* private property.

Does George Scialabba have something else in mind? Does he classify worker cooperatives as individual ownership or a hopeless kind of nostalgia? If so, he should read up on the Mondragon movement in Spain, where, out of 103 cooperatives founded between 1956 and 1986 in all kinds of production and distribution and involving now

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20,000 workers, only three have failed. This contrasts with a U.S. rate of firm failure of 80 percent within five years.

But anyway, thanks, George, for the kind review.

JOHN C. CORT
Roxbury, Mass. □

From Socialist Youth

Editors:

The Democratic Socialists of America Youth Section held its annual winter conference at Columbia University in mid-February. Several members of the *Dissent* Editorial Board participated in the conference as speakers and we thank them for their contributions to the success of the event.

Bogdan Denitch spoke on the changing political scene in Eastern Europe. Joanne Barkan spoke on the Swedish road to economic democracy. Fred Siegel spoke on crime and criminal justice, and Irving Howe gave about one hundred activists a remarkable forty-five-minute tour of socialist thought from Karl Marx to Michael Harrington. Michael closed out the conference for us with a survey of world socialism and how we fit into it.

We appreciate the role *Dissent* plays in our effort and look forward to future dialogue.

DINAH LEVENTHAL
Brooklyn, N.Y. □

Estonia

Editors:

There is a fundamental misunderstanding concerning recent events in the Soviet Union, brought to my attention again in Irving Howe's recent article on *glasnost* ("The Earth Still Turns", Fall 1988). This error continues to be perpetuated by the mass media who find it necessary to lump events in Estonia together with the considerably more "xenophobic" conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

It is wrong to suggest, as the media do, that events in Estonia, including the recent declaration of sovereignty, are intended as steps toward independence based upon some collective nationalist sentiment. For instance, the New York *Times* has gone so far as to suggest that Estonia is attempting to reestablish some form of "bourgeois nationalism" in its state. This utterly misreads what the problem is all about.

Certainly there are nationalist elements present, notably the Estonian National Independence Party, whose declared goal *is* independence. On the whole, however, the immediate goals are much more humble. Estonians are more concerned with gaining some measure of control over the decision-making process, which till now has tended to centralize power in Moscow. This call for change appears to be more a problem of democratization than of what can properly be called nationalism. The ethnic conflict between Estonians and non-Estonians (that is, primarily Russian immigrants living in Estonia) is present, but this conflict is based on changing policies that have threatened the use of Estonian language simply because the political process has been so extremely centralized.

In contrast, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is more clearly founded on mutual nationalist, historical resentments. This has led to mass demonstrations and outbreaks of violence. No such violence has occurred in Estonia, primarily because the social (and psychological) causes are so vastly different. Perhaps to "outsiders", the distinctions being made here may appear to be splitting hairs. However, it also has broad analytical implications insofar as understanding how it is, that Estonia has legitimately gone about pushing toward reform and tacitly receiving Gorbachev's approval, or at least being tolerated, whereas in Armenia, tanks have rolled in to quell disturbances.

EDGAR KASLA
Irvine, Calif. □

ERRATUM

The word in the last line of the first column of Robert Athearn's article, "The Constitution, Taste, and 'Violence of Factions,' " in the Spring 1989 issue of *Dissent* should be interferes, not interfaces. The sentence now reads, "When any person or faction exercises autonomy in a way that interferes with the equal right of another to do the same, the effect is a master-slave relation with that other."

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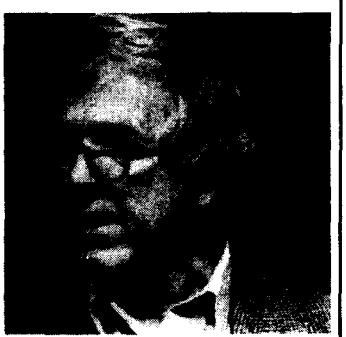

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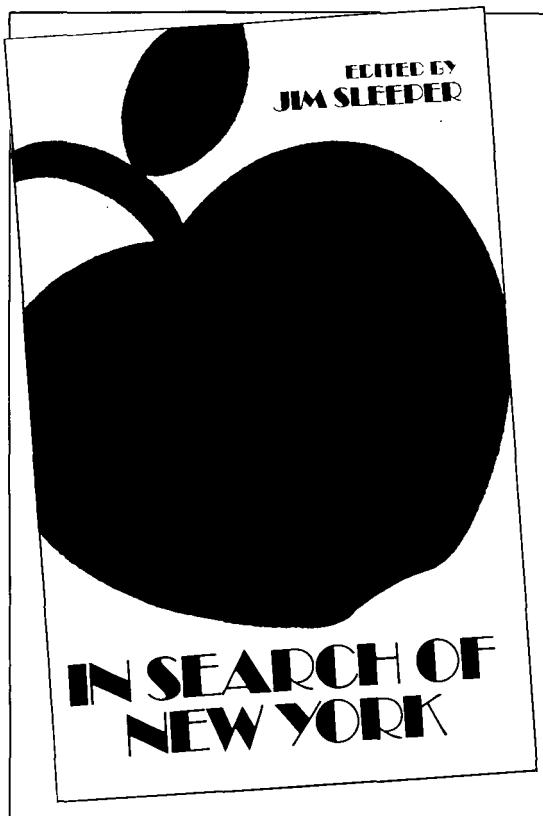

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